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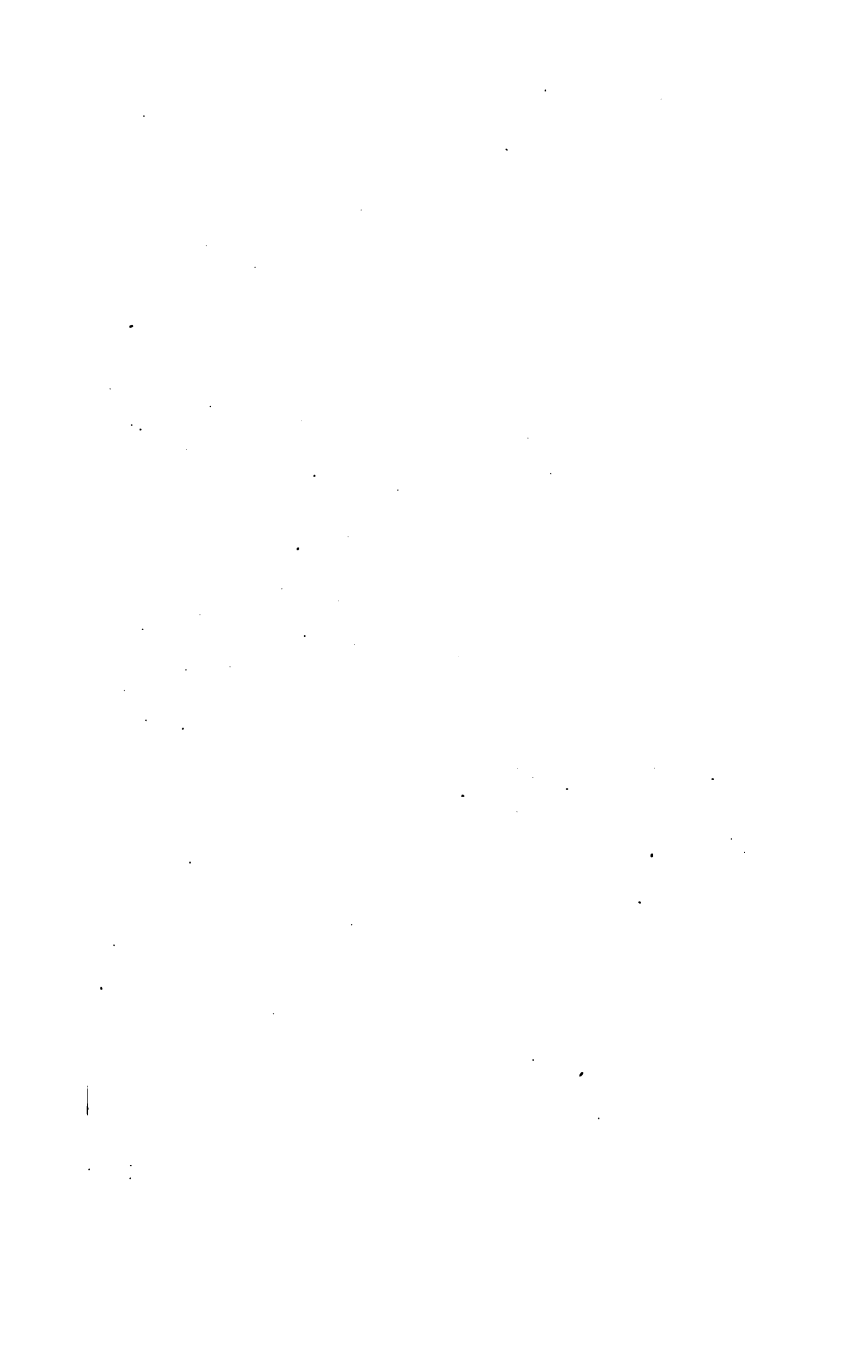
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A DEFENCE OF REVEALED
RELIGION

PRINTED FOR JAMES SPEIRS, LONDON

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A Defence of Revealed Religion

*BEING STRICTURES UPON THE VIEWS
OF THE REV. C. VOYSEY, B.A.*

Six Lectures

By JOSEPH DEANS



JAMES SPEIRS

36 BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON

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P R E F A C E.

THE recent prosecution of the Rev. C. Voysey for heresy has naturally drawn a considerable amount of attention to his teachings. The legal part of the case has, it will generally be conceded, even by those who endorse his theological opinions, been satisfactorily disposed of. But, altogether apart from the legal issue, Mr. Voysey raised questions of immense doctrinal importance as touching the very fundamentals of religious faith. The author of these Lectures, during the hearing of the Appeal (or rather while judgment was pending), gave the first three Lectures contained in this little volume; the fourth and fifth were delivered immediately after his recent Lecture in Manchester (June 9th, 1871). It having been thought *that, if published, they might be able to throw a light*

upon the subjects under dispute, from a standpoint not generally taken, the Author has much pleasure in sending them forth to the public, in the hope that they may be useful to the cause of Truth.

102 HAMPDEN STREET, BOLTON.

August, 1871.

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LECTURE I.

THE FALL AND ATONEMENT.

“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

1 COR. xv. 22.

IN his appeal, Mr. Voysey tells us that his aim is to “meet and correct the prevailing error as to our wide and almost hopeless separation from God ; to meet and correct the false and mischievous theories which make it seem that God is not the Father of men, and that we are not His dear children.” This aim is a high one, well worthy of the efforts of the brightest intellects of earth, and of the hearts touched by the warm love of heaven.

In pursuing this object, Mr. Voysey vigorously assails the popularly received doctrines concerning some of the most important articles of the Christian Faith, concerning the Fall, Original Sin, the Atonement, the Eternity of Hell, and the Divinity of Jesus Christ. He argues with all the earnestness pertaining to sincere minds against views that He believes tend to the degradation of the divine character, striving to *present God in a more loveable light than that in*

which He is generally contemplated, and repudiating, in the most uncompromising manner, every human tradition which would from ignorance and carnality attribute to God feelings and conduct that might with greater propriety be considered to belong to the devil. We can throughout the teachings of Mr. Voysey trace this motive, which is most highly commendable, and which might well excuse errors of judgment, if such are found in his appeal.

The questions of the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Eternity of Hell we shall reserve for future comment—to-night we purpose to state and examine Mr. Voysey's views on the Fall and Atonement, as set forth by himself in his address to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Mr. Voysey admits that the following six propositions are truly charged against him : 1. Mankind are not by nature the children of God's wrath ; 2. Mankind are not separated from God by sin ; 3. Mankind are not under God's wrath ; 4. Mankind are not under a curse ; 5. Mankind are not in danger of endless suffering ; 6. That there is no curse to remove by the shedding of the innocent blood of Christ. Mr. Voysey also admits having taught that the commonly received doctrine of the Fall is totally at variance with the teaching of Christ.

One of these propositions, the one concerning endless suffering, we shall not further touch upon to-night.

In defence of the propositions just cited, Mr. Voy-

sey, in the course of his appeal, says : " Though men are by nature sinful, they are God's children and the objects of His love. To affirm that men are the children of God's wrath is not merely to affirm what is not in the Articles, but to talk pure nonsense. . . . The Articles of Religion only affirm that the sin of man is the object of God's wrath, and they do not affirm that the persons of sinners are so. . . . The Articles of Religion nowhere say that men are under God's curse : they do not even quote the passage about ' Christ being made a curse for us.' They do say that a certain tendency or disposition in us deserves God's wrath, and this I have continually maintained. Even more I have affirmed : that our sinful tendency not only deserves God's wrath, but inevitably and surely meets its due punishment. The wrong tendencies in our own children deserve and bring down the anger of their parents, but are the children therefore under their parents' curse ? Is not the righteous anger of God against evil-doing itself a blessing and not a curse to the evil-doer ? I will now briefly state what I have aimed at contradicting in the sermons cited under the articles of charge. What I have denied, is the theory that Adam was morally perfect, whereas by common consent he is believed to have fallen at the first temptation, as most of his posterity do now. I have never denied that God is angry with sin, but have declared my belief that He will and does punish *us justly for everything we do amiss*, and that His

anger and punishment are designed to work for our improvement. I have only denied that God is unjust or excessive in His anger, and that He is hostile to sinful men. I have understood that, according to the common idea, the 'curse of God' means a sentence passed upon Adam and all his race for inherited as well as actual guilt. I have denied this with all the energy that I could summon."

Mr. Voysey also admits having maintained "that the commonly received doctrines of intercession and mediation by Christ, and atonement or reconciliation to God by the death of Christ, are all opposed to the perfect harmony and simplicity of the love of God, and to the teaching of Jesus Christ."

Such in brief are the teachings of Mr. Voysey concerning "The Fall and Atonement." He asks to be judged not by old traditions and prejudices, but at the bar of reason by the evidence of truth. The demand is a just and fair one—let us, casting aside the lesser question of their legality, examine them in the light of the testimony of the Word of God.

The first great theme is the perfect and unchanging love of God even to sinners. This is the basis upon which Mr. Voysey seeks to build up his system. Let us test its soundness. Upon this question we are thoroughly at one with him. "God is love" says the Apostle, thus expressing the fact that this is His essential nature. Love is not merely an attribute of God, *it is the very foundation* of His being. "God is love."

He being infinite in every respect—if He were capable of anger he would be infinitely angry. But infinite anger and infinite love cannot co-exist in the same mind; and since God is love and changes not, He must ever love, and love all. That sinners are separated from God, and that punishment always follows sin, we believe to be incontrovertible facts. The cause of this separation and punishment we shall endeavour to shew in our next—at present our subject only requires that we should substantiate the idea that they do not originate in the anger of God. The Psalmist tells us that “the Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.” The assertion is grandly broad, putting out of question the idea that upon sinners He pours out the vials of vengeance and wrath. Sinners are those that have taken up an attitude of enmity against God; yet what says our Saviour: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of the Highest, who is kind even to the unthankful and to the evil. He causes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and His rain to descend upon the just and the unjust.” Is that a love to be destroyed and turned into anger by human sin, which is described in the tender address—“Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, she may forget, but I cannot forget thee.” And do not all the Divine invitations to the acceptance of forgiveness and pardon, *and all His earnest calls to repentance, teach*

us that nought can cause Him to withhold His love, that nought can so reverse His nature as to make Him angry with us. "The Lord has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." He gives to us according to our necessities rather than our deserts; and at no time do we need His love so much as in the day when we have succumbed to the allurements of sin. "As our days, so shall our strength be"—in our hour of need He will be with us though we have rejected Him. This is our ideal of a perfect Deity; and we cannot picture God in too loveable a guise, for He is the Author and the Origin of all that is pure and holy. "He is the Father of lights, in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—pleading ever that we would avail ourselves of His mercy and taste His love.

It is indeed a noble purpose to try to present the world with such a conception of God as will awaken a higher reverence and a deeper love for Him in the hearts of men, and to aid in the dissipation of those views of Deity which have induced an aversion in the minds of men towards their Father in heaven.

In the commonly accepted views concerning the Fall and Atonement, Mr. Voysey recognizes stumbling blocks standing in the way of man's approach to God as his loving Father.

Firstly :—The Fall. That man has fallen away from purity, and heaven, and God, is a fact that none *can question*. The humanity of our day is prone to

evil ; and we cannot for a moment suppose that he would have been so created by his Heavenly Father. Mr. Voysey seems in the assertion " I have denied the theory that Adam was morally perfect " to doubt the generally received idea that man's first parents were pure and innocent. But to doubt this is to reflect upon the loving mercy of God. Man was the creation of God, called into being that he might receive the rich blessings of his Maker. " For Thy pleasure they are and were created ; " and the pleasure of God can only be in that which is free from sin. We can only reconcile man's present moral state with the belief in God's all-embracing love, by accepting as an undoubted fact the belief that man has fallen. Created in innocence, he has by the abuse of his freedom perverted his whole nature. Looking towards and crawling upon the earth, instead of aspiring towards heaven, he is now by nature a sensual and selfish being, the merest wreck of his former self.

" Though traces remain of the splendour of Eden,
The trail of the serpent is over them all."

What then were the results of the fall, in so far as they affected the relations between God and His creatures ? With Mr. Voysey, we cannot for a moment imagine that God doomed all their descendants to endless suffering simply because our first parents sinned. Such an act would more befit a barbarous tyrant of earth than the merciful Ruler of heaven. Through the prophet Ezekiel it is dis-

tinctly laid down—"The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son : the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." This is the sum of the teaching of the whole of the 18th chapter of the prophecy through Ezekiel.

The fall did not at all affect God's attitude of loving mercy towards man, though it altered man's attitude of obedience towards God. Our fallen parents transmitted to their posterity not the curse of God, but the curse of man—not the curse of an angry Deity, but the curse of a sinful and depraved humanity. There is a law of God impressed upon all living things, animal and vegetable, that we call the law of natural heritage. The formula of this law is "like begets like." Man in his purity was endowed with the faculty of reproduction, by virtue of which he might aid in calling into existence other beings like himself. But when this pristine purity was corrupted, the children of men began to inherit tendencies towards evil. This is the curse of the fall. We are born into the world full of tendencies towards evil and sin. But we are not punished simply for inheriting these tendencies—punishment only overtakes us when we ultimate these tendencies in life, and voluntarily choose them and adopt them as our own. We "die in Adam" when we follow his example, and deliberately *transgress the known* commandments of God. The

commonly received doctrine is that since God demands a perfect obedience to His law, and men are imperfect owing to the fall, consequently the best efforts of man are altogether unavailing to procure the divine favour. Such a theory we cannot entertain. The Lord is revealed to us as a "just God;" and no just Being would demand from man an obedience which He knows cannot be given. We do not mean to say that man can of himself fulfil the divine requirement, but we believe that he can do so by the divine help. The Lord can only ask us to do our best. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." It is a libel on the character of God to say that because one man sinned He laid all future ages under the curse of His wrath, or to assert that He ever asked man to do anything unless He had previously bestowed upon him the power. We live under the curse of Adam, and the love of God impelled Him to give the world an antidote.

This antidote was the work of Redemption—the Atonement. Not that God demanded the sacrifice of innocent blood to appease His anger—not that He refused to be reconciled to man unless His justice was satisfied by the death of an all-sufficient substitute. God regarded more the misery of man than His own satisfaction—He thought more of man's persistent sinfulness than of His own broken laws. He would have *been well satisfied with man's return to Him, and would*

willingly have forgiven him and blotted out his sin for His mercy's sake. The obstacle in the way of human salvation was not the inappeasable wrath of God, but the persistent obduracy of man. Like the father mentioned in the parable he was ever anxious to meet the returning prodigal with open arms, and even to meet and embrace him while yet a great way off. This is plainly taught in the prophecy from which we previously quoted. "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die ; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right ; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him : he hath done that which is lawful and right ; he shall surely live."

The work of Atonement was not rendered necessary by the anger of God ; on the contrary, it was "in His love and in His pity He redeemed us." It was not because He was angry with the world on account of the sin of Adam, but "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believed on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The idea that God needed reconciling to us is in direct opposition to the testimony of Scripture, which affirms that it was man that needed reconciling to God. "If *when* we were enemies, we were reconciled to God *by the death of His Son*, much more, being reconciled,

we shall be saved by His life." "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation : to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This we see is the very reverse of the popular doctrine of reconciliation.

So also in respect to the Atonement, which is mentioned but once in the New Testament, and in these terms : "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." It is *man*, not God, who receives the atonement.

So further, the scriptural view of the deliverance wrought by the Saviour is nowhere described as a deliverance from the wrath or anger of God ; on the contrary, "for this cause was the Son of God manifested in the flesh, that He might destroy the works of the devil." "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel ; for He hath visited and redeemed His people : that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of them that hate us : that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." God was never our enemy ; He was always our best friend—"a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." From these, and similar testimonies and *considerations*, we are impelled to believe with Mr.

Voysey, "That the commonly received doctrines of intercession and mediation by Christ, and atonement or reconciliation by the death of Christ, are all opposed to the perfect harmony and simplicity of the love of God, and to the teaching of Jesus Christ." Thus, in so far as Mr. Voysey's opinions negative the ideas contained in the popular doctrines of the Fall and Atonement, we heartily agree with him. The Scriptures do not teach us any views so degrading to our heavenly Father; and if the Voysey Case only leads men to examine the foundation of old beliefs, it will not be without its use. Men are no longer to be satisfied with the mere traditional beliefs of bygone days. A spirit of inquiry is abroad in the world, investigating everywhere—often with little reverence for the opinions of the past. The beliefs that are founded upon truth have nothing to fear from this scrutiny—the more clearly they are seen the more heartily they can be understood. Men will no longer be impeded in their search after truth by the cry of mystery—wherever a mystery is presented to them they endeavour to find its key. We hail these phenomena as signs of a healthy progress—they indicate the approach of a time when merely traditional dogmas shall be swept away, and prejudice shall be no more permitted to stifle truth. They bespeak a greater earnestness, and a stronger thirst for a more close acquaintance with the *teachings* of the great Creator. It may seem at present *as if the spirit of inquiry had raised up a species of*

scepticism or infidelity in the world. This may be expected at the first onset. Many minds, on being led to see the fallacy of their old faith, will in the strength of their recoil be disposed to doubt all faith. But investigation does not necessarily imply doubt ; and we have that faith in the truth of the religion of Jesus Christ as to believe that it will not only survive the scrutiny, but that it will continue to shew to humanity an ever expanding system capable of meeting its wants in all time. The cry for more light shews that men are not content to have their eyes bandaged by mysteries and traditions and legends. They are not content to see the truth through other men's eyes, they *will* see for themselves. Religion must be rational as well as devout to meet the demands of the new age. Men want a God that they can love for His perfectness, and refuse to prostrate themselves before a deity tainted with the sins and weaknesses of wicked men. The final issue will be a firmer faith, a deeper trust, a more absorbing devotion—leading the world onward from its grander conceptions of Deity to a holier life of love to God and man. It is because we believe that Mr. Voysey's vigorous protest will awaken a wider interest in the new school of thought that we have gladly welcomed it.

We do not coincide with all Mr. Voysey's conclusions. Far from it. We believe that his earnest longing after a higher conception of God has caused *him to reject* views which, seen in their true light,

would be found quite in harmony with the infinite and perfect love of the Lord.

Thus, in regard to the question of the Atonement, although we do not know what Mr. Voysey's views are affirmatively, we know that his rejection of the Divinity of Jesus Christ will prevent him accepting the one we regard as the grandest.

No view can give us a more favourable idea of the infinity of the Divine Love than the New Church doctrine concerning the Atonement. It teaches us that it was God Himself that came upon earth, clothed in the vestments of humanity, to save and redeem His children—that Jesus Christ was in very deed our “God manifest in the flesh,” our “Emmanuel, God with us.” Men having wandered far away from Him, in His love He followed them, He became as one of them. “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory;” and as it is elsewhere expressed,—Heb. ii. 9-18.

Human nature was fallen—He came to show that it might again be exalted. Men were the slaves of hell—He came to make captivity captive and give good gifts unto men. He came to bridge over the great gulf—to be the Mediator between God and man. None but our God could do this; and He did it because He pitied and loved us. This is a grander conception of Deity than even Mr. Voysey can present us *with*. *It is a picture of marvellous, matchless love!*

We might adduce numerous testimonies from the Word in support of the view that it was no Second Person, nor no human being, that accomplished the work of our Redemption, but shall reserve them until we separately consider the subject of the Saviour's Divinity. At present we would confine our attention to this view as it affects our conception of Deity. In it we see that the grand work of bringing about reconciliation between God and man was not delegated to another, or performed by a substitute. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation unto Him." It was a work involving suffering and temptation; for against the personification of virtue wicked men and evil spirits leagued themselves together to accomplish His downfall.

But the Saviour conquered all His foes by the power of truth and love. His weapons were from the armoury of divine truth, and His breast was animated by the ardour of divine love, while His arm wielded the force of divine power. He was in truth very God, and very man.

Thought fails to see how God could more clearly manifest His love than by an act like this—coming down that He might help men to rise—not by keeping the law instead of them, but for their sakes. He came not to do our work, but to enable *us* to do it. "To them gave He power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe in His name.*"

"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

We "die in Adam," when, imbued with his spirit of disobedience, we follow his example—we "live in Christ," when, imbued with *His* spirit, we follow *His* example. Thus there is a parallelism between the Fall and Atonement. *We* neither fall nor rise by proxy—the curse of the fall, "eternal death," and the blessing of Atonement, "eternal life," are alike the results of our own choice and conduct.

Our hereditary nature leads us to sin. "We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear: but our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid His face from us." But yet He does not spurn us. In the words of Jesus we hear His universal calls to peace and pardon: "Whosoever cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out;" "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death."

We regard the "fall" and its curse as incontrovertible facts, to be seen in our everyday experience. But the fall is perpetually going on in those who *confirm themselves* in sin, and the curse is self-inflicted. *We deem the Atonement a necessary work for the*

deliverance of man and his reconciliation with God ; but it was the love and not the anger of God that deemed it necessary : it was a deliverance from our spiritual enemies, the power of darkness, and the great obstacle that stood in the way of perfect forgiveness was the stubbornness of man.

God never needed the offering of any sacrifice of innocent blood to induce Him to forgive. He ever said, " I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn from his ways and live." Justice could not be satisfied ; it would be further outraged by the punishment of the innocent instead of the guilty ; but the just may voluntarily suffer for the unjust, not in their stead, but for their sakes.

He came to help us—to give us comforting and cheering words, a bright and peerless example, a new and mightier power, from whence we might receive new courage and emulation and strength to resist and subdue our internal foes. With this view of the Atonement before us, we may contemplate God with feelings of greater veneration and respect. We no longer behold Him as angry and refusing to forgive unless a price is paid (in which case *He* does not forgive at all)—we no longer behold a terrible God that the child-like mind cannot love—we no longer behold a *divided* Deity, one part demanding a sacrifice of suffering, another part consenting to suffer, and another part apparently quite unconcerned in the matter. *The world (of Christianity)* has long felt a difficulty

upon this subject; and while men have tried to love the Father even as they have loved the Son, the effort has been in vain. Human hearts have clung to Jesus Christ, the hope of the dying has been in Him, and their last breath has pronounced His name, and though prayers have been offered to the Father, they have been "for Jesus' sake." The angry God has been loved little and feared much—the merciful Son has been loved much and feared none at all.

It is time that this divided allegiance should be disavowed; and indeed many have denied the Godhead of Jesus Christ as their only way of escape from it. Others, however, with (what we believe to be) a clearer insight into scriptural teaching, have acknowledged *Him* as God alone, "in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Upon another occasion we shall ask you to attentively follow us while we endeavour to prove the Sole Divinity of Jesus Christ—we have only here alluded to it in an incidental manner, as presenting us with a nobler conception of our Father in heaven than is presented in the popular views concerning the Fall and Atonement.

The highest conception that we can form of God must be far short of the reality, *but* we may be sure that His perfections do not partake of the nature of human imperfections—"His ways are *higher* than our ways." The unforgiving, angry, relentless spirit is an infirmity in man; and surely it cannot exist in the *Author and Giver* of every good; surely our God can-

not perpetually want pleading with and reminding of an offered sacrifice.

Oh, no ! the divine mercy is all sufficient to ensure our full pardon, and the divine power is all sufficient to endow us with the means of availing ourselves of the pardon if we are so disposed.

“ The quality of mercy is not strained :
It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed :
It blesses him that gives, and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mighty : it becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown.”

LECTURE II.

ETERNAL SUFFERING.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still."—REV. xxii. 11.

THE subject announced for our consideration to-night must always be a distasteful one to men possessed of kindly and compassionate feelings.

The fact that men must suffer *at all* after leaving this world can form no pleasant subject of thought ; and the idea that they must suffer *for ever* is one from which the mind naturally shrinks as from a subject too painful for human contemplation.

But it is not wise to attempt to ignore subjects of this kind. To dwell upon them occasionally may be of use. Were we to be led by our feelings alone, we should confine our attention to themes of a pleasing character—we should think about the beauties, the pleasures, the virtues of the world, and live in a mental atmosphere of perfectness and purity. But this ideal world would not be the real world. Earth has its deformities as well as its beauties, its pains as well as *its pleasures, its vices as well as its virtues, and there-*

fore, in taking a survey of things as they are, the feelings and inclinations must be regulated by the judgment. We do not believe in always looking at the dark side, but we shall make many a great mistake if we imagine that no dark side exists. Vice and crime and misery are in our midst, as foul plague-spots vitiating society, and if the disease is to be removed it must be grappled with, and before it can be fairly grappled with its magnitude must be known. All evils and dangers can be best avoided as they become well known, and hence it is of importance that, however painful the subject may be, we should endeavour to become possessed of clear and rational views upon the subject of the future lot of the wicked.

In the Voysey Case, the subject is alluded to in these terms : " Mankind are not in danger of endless suffering."

This proposition is put forward in opposition to the commonly received view which looks upon the endless suffering of the whole human race as the penalty inflicted for the sin of Adam. Viewed in this aspect, we do not believe that man is in danger of suffering at all. God creates men for heaven and not for hell ; He intends them to be happy, not miserable ; He appoints them to life, not death ; and if man fails to realize this state, it is because he deliberately and of his own choice prefers the opposite one. Thus it is written in the holy Book, " For Thy pleasure they are and were *created* ;" and the nature of the divine pleasure is de-

scribed in these words—"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live." The Lord also teaches the same great truth: "It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

Such being the divine purpose, and He being a God of infinite love, "in Whom there is neither variable-ness nor shadow of turning," it is unreasonable to suppose that because one man sinned, He would neutralize His grand design by condemning all human posterity to an eternity of suffering, and decree that they should come into the world inheriting wrath rather than grace.

Putting aside as dishonouring to the infinite perfectness of God the idea of man being in danger of endless suffering, consequent upon the passing of an arbitrary sentence by Him, let us proceed to examine from whence comes the suffering that follows sin, what is its nature, and what is its duration?

Before doing so, however, let us establish the fact that suffering does follow sin. Sin is the breaking of law, in the theologic sense, the breaking of God's spiritual law, and through the prophet Ezekiel we have the announcement—"the soul that sinneth it shall surely die." This was the sentence that we read of in the early chapters of Genesis as the warning of God to Adam. "In the day that thou eatest *thereof* thou shalt surely die;" and the reiteration of

ence in the prophecy serves to shew us that shment allotted to Adam comes upon us copy Adam's disobedience. It will not be that we should multiply quotations from the s in proof of the position that suffering or ent follows sin ; the idea is constantly being ed in the Word from the language addressed

"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be , and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the the declaration of the Apocalypse, "Behold, quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to n according as his works shall be."

l, this is the one great lesson of the Bible, men to the contemplation of pleasure and s as the reward of a life of virtue, and of pain ry as the reward of vice. "They shall come y that have done good to the resurrection of they that have done evil to the resurrection tion."

ce then comes the suffering that follows sin ? er, it does not proceed from the passing of an penalty by the Lord—it is contained in the . It is not God who inflicts punishment—ishes himself.

ay perhaps see this best by means of an illus- A man deliberately takes hold of a bar of red- as a consequence he gets burnt and experi- in. The punishment is self-inflicted ; and it unreasonable for him to charge the natural

law which teaches us that human hands will get burnt if they touch hot iron, or the person who put the iron in the fire, with burning him. The burning resulted not from the iron having been put in the fire, nor from the laws regulating the consequences of contact between human hands and hot substances, but from his own act of touching the iron.

Or take another illustration. A man, though warned of the danger, eats the berries of the deadly nightshade, and he dies, or is made ill, as the case may be. His suffering does not come from the maker of the berries, nor from the fact that they were within his reach—for belladonna is one of the most useful and powerful of known medicines, in small doses it is almost a specific in cases of scarlet fever and throbbing headache—the suffering comes from the man eating it in large quantities, and is evidently self-inflicted.

So it is with the suffering that ensues from the indulgence of man in sin. It emanates not from any arbitrary decree of the Lord ; and the workings of His Providence convince us that if a word of His could ensure the eternal happiness of us all, that word would long ago have been spoken. But since freedom is essential to happiness—"for a gilded cage is still a prison"—the Lord leaves us in perfect liberty to choose for ourselves. But punishment and sin are united. If a man breaks a natural law he will bring upon himself a natural punishment ; if he breaks a spiritual law *he will bring upon himself a spiritual punishment.*

here it may be well to notice one great difference between natural and spiritual laws ; man may break natural laws unintentionally, but he can only break spiritual laws, or sin, deliberately. *Sin is the breaking known law.* That it is the breaking of the law, not an arbitrary decree, that punishes man, may be evident from the declaration of the Psalmist, "evil shall slay the wicked," and from the words of Moses, "sure your sin will find you out." It is the evil that slays, the sin that finds man out ; and "the wages of sin is death." Compare for instance the laws of a spiritual nature with the laws of bodily health. Attention to the matters of diet, exercise, ventilation, on similar subjects, will ensure to man the largest amount of health of which his constitution is capable ; if he neglects these things he inevitably suffers. The suffering is owing to his own carelessness and disobedience. The rules of health were given to man that he might observe them, and derive benefit as the result ; if he violates them, he punishes himself. It is the same in regard to the laws governing man's spiritual existence ; they were given as a guide to wisdom and pleasure ; violated, they produce misery and pain. The punishments of sin which we therefore see do not justly be accounted of divine origin, they are appointed by the Lord as means for the restraining of our passions and to prevent our indulging in them.

"To wilful men,
*The injuries that they themselves procure
 Must be their schoolmasters.*"

Such being the origin, what is the *nature* of the suffering that follows sin? The suffering resulting from sin is not all deferred until man enters upon the life after death. We see a great deal of it here. It is around us upon every side, for it is inseparable from the sin itself. Look at the Continent of Europe, and see the dreadful consequences of the sinful cherishing of the lust of dominion. France, in her mad ambition drawing the sword for her own aggrandisement, now lies in the dust a feeble and pitiable wreck, and Prussia, intoxicated with success, stands over her, determined at any cost to make her downfall and humiliation complete, while thousands of desolate homes and starving women and children reap the sad fruits of the sinful sowing. Look at the shattered intellects, the ruined characters, the famishing families of the slaves of drink; note the poverty, the pauperism, and the crime resulting from the sin of idleness; behold the countless forms of woe and misery with which the world is oppressed: if you trace them to their origin, you will find that they are the results of sin.

Let us, bearing these things in mind, endeavour to apply them to the consideration of the future lot of the wicked.

Good men go to one home, wicked men to another. Now what must be the natural state of a community of wicked men. Let us consider. At death "the body returns to the ground from whence it came, and the spirit unto God who gave it." To this spiritual

part of man belong all his thoughts, delights, feelings, inclinations, desires, passions and loves. All these therefore he takes with him into the eternal world. As the tree falls so must it lie," or as it is written in the Word, "he that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Every soul is governed by some ruling love, and whatever form it may assume, every love, when traced to its source, will be found to originate in the love of the Lord and the neighbour on the one hand, and the love of self and the world on the other.

The dwellers in the infernal kingdom are such as are principled in the love of self and the world; they aim at nothing but the acquisition of power, or gain, or self-indulgence, caring not at what cost to others. What must be the normal condition of a race of people all confirmed in these infernal loves—when all earthly restraints are taken away, when man becomes as it were the very form of his heart's love, when the guises of hypocrisy and the fear of reproach are cast off, and the wicked man is really himself! And all this too without the sanctifying presence of truth! Here we are often induced to curb and subdue our passions by the pleadings of truth; but as we are taught in the parable of the talents, a time comes when he who has failed to employ the truth entrusted to him must deliver it up: "to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." We may gather a faint, and

but a very faint, idea of what such a world may be. In all our large towns there are portions which we call the slums, which appear like festering sores upon the body of humanity. In these slums, the idle, the dissolute and the vicious are congregated together as if drawn by a common sympathy ; these are the abodes of human vices, the birds of night, shrinking from the clear light of day and venturing in other localities only as the dusk comes on. Here are mingled in hideous confusion the vagabond, the rant, the besotted drunkard, and the thief, the harlot, and the pugilist ; the streets are narrow, the people are filthy, and the houses ill-ventilated and cramped ; the scowling and besotted faces, proclaim the victims of sensuality ; indeed everything that is human seems together banished : nothing is seen but what is revolting and deformed, nothing is heard but the sound of cursing and rioting. And if our slums be such to the one who merely passes through them, what must they be to the wretched inhabitants ? To think of the career of these outcasts from all that is holy and pure, these slaves to sin and passion, is enough to make the heart turn sick and the mind to reel. Some of them never knew much better. Nursed in sin and reared in iniquity, with all their nobler faculties undeveloped, dishonesty is to them the means of subsistence, and debauchery the acme of pleasure ; all that is sensual and selfish within them has by indulgence acquired strength, and no moral feeling helps to keep it in subjection. Such may be fitly compared to the beasts of

perish, living only in the plane of the senses. But there is another class which is even worse than this, and it is composed of those that have sinned against the light, who, when children, knelt in prayer by the mother's knee, who were instructed in the principles of religion and morality, and yet in their manhood have chosen the company of the rake, the drunkard, and the blackleg, and descending little by little are now steeped in sin, pests to society and blasphemers of God. Oh, how terrible must this life be—no love, no rest, no peace, no security. The home of fierce and unchecked lust and passion, the scene of perpetual quarrel and discontent, the abode of fear of the world outside and of distrust of one another. Oh! “the wicked are like a troubled sea when it cannot rest. There is no peace, saith our God, to the wicked.”

If we would have an idea of the misery of hell, let us strive to conceive the misery of a number of places like these. A vast host of beings congregated together, all actuated by sordid and sensual motives, the lust of dominion or the love of vile and filthy pleasures. Such a home must be miserable indeed of itself without the intervention of the wrath of God to make it more intense—it is only the holy love that ever and anon towers above the mass of corruption and depravity that makes life pleasant here, and in the infernal world all pure loves are perverted into hatreds. The mere fact of wicked men taking their evil desires and bad passions with them, and connecting themselves

together by the law of affinity, is sufficient in it to evolve a misery of which men here can have but faint conceptions. The misery of hell is the emanation of its cherished evils.

But it may be asked what about hell-fire in men who are tormented? Each infernal carries it within his own breast. What fire burns so fiercely as the inflamed passions of anger, and jealousy, and avarice, and lust, and love of power. These produce corruptions that no stream of earth can quench; they have been the elements devouring whole nations and wasting the fair fields of human virtue and intelligence. The fire of hell is not material, but infernal; and is not the less, but rather the more real on that account. It is this infernal fire nourished by men on earth that flushes the face and causes the eyes to glare when the mind is filled with hatred and anger. And thus is spoken of in the holy Word, as in Isaiah, "where the worm burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke, and they shall be consumed as the stubble, and also in Peter, "the tongue is a fire, or we say, the tongue is the fire of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the members of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." When passion rages, and men cannot satisfy them to the full, they are tormented by the fire, and the torment of hell consists *in the perpetual effort to carry out their malicious signs upon others, and their inability to do so*

extent that they desire. In a great measure evil counteracts itself; for when men discover that its indulgence always brings punishment, their indulgence will be less habitual. The fire of hell is the self-love that fills each heart, the punishment of hell is the inseparable attachment which ever adheres to the commission of sin; the torment of hell is the pent up rage which infernals feel when they are unable to gratify their vicious longings. Oh! surely this is suffering acute enough; in hell wicked spirits are unable to injure the good, and their own evils recoiling upon their heads form a punishment terrible indeed.

If it is needed that our views of hell should be such as to inspire the wicked with terror and induce them to reform, we see that this can be done without picturing God as the tormentor of fallen men!

Yet God is in hell. "If I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there." Even over these confirmed devils He watches with the eye of Providence, to mitigate their sufferings and restrain their violence. Hence it is that He *permits* them to be punished, that they may be restrained, and to be tormented lest they should become worse.

We may now fairly approach the consideration of the grave and solemn question of the duration of the suffering of hell. Could we not all at first thought like to *cherish the idea* that the suffering of each one *may some time end*, and he may be admitted into

heaven? But a careful study of the Word forbids such a conclusion, and we may see many rational grounds for receiving the testimony of the Word. We are aware that a difficulty meets us at the onset from the fact that the original words translated in our version, "everlasting" and "eternal," literally mean "ages upon ages," for they had no word embodying our idea of eternity. But we must remember that if upon this ground we reject the doctrine of the eternity of hell, we must also reject that of the eternity of heaven, for the two states are spoken of in similar terms. It appears to us that the whole tenor of Bible teaching is to the effect, that by the life here man fixes his final state, and this is our security of an eternal happiness in heaven, as it is our danger of an eternal misery in hell. Thus it is written, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." And our Lord also speaks of going "into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." This fixity of the future state is also clearly represented by the saying in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, "Between us and you is a great gulf fixed: so that they *which would* pass from hence to you cannot; neither *can they* pass to us that would come from thence."

Hell is the deliberately chosen home of the wicked, and to escape from it they must leave themselves. If an act of immediate mercy would translate men to heaven ; and enable them to be happy, none would ever go to hell for a moment. It is only the class who have trampled upon the good, and rejected it with their eyes open, that inherit the kingdom of darkness. We cannot for one moment imagine that God could permit men to go there for venial or involuntary sins, for errors of judgment, or for single deeds done in moments of deep temptation ; the Lord can read the hearts of men and discern the ruling motive in the lives that seem mixed to us. When men have perverted the love of God and spurned the offices of His Holy Spirit from vicious motives, they have confirmed themselves in evil ere they leave this world. They are in the state in which they say—

“ Evil, be thou my good ; ”

or as Milton more fully describes it—

“ The more I see
Pleasures about me, so much more I feel
Torments within me, as from the hateful siege
Of contraries. All good to me becomes
Bane, and in heaven much worse would be my state ;
For only in destroying find I ease
To my relentless mind.”

And in hell there is nothing to change their internal character ; the divine love cannot do it, for in such a sphere its influences must be even less powerful upon *them than during their life in the world*: punishment

cannot convert them, for though it may force the conduct, it possesses no power in moulding the thoughts and the affections ; the leadings of truth cannot draw them from sin, for there they have taken falsity for their guide, because it harmonizes with their cherished desires. To the dwellers in the regions of the lost may be applied the Saviour's lament: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." It is the voice of Eternal Truth that proclaims the law of death,—“He that is filthy, let him be filthy still: he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Thus heaven and hell are linked in one decree; our hope of eternal bliss and our dread of eternal misery are based upon similar grounds; that the life here is the life of preparation, and the life hereafter that of realization. “As we sow so shall we reap.” Now is the seed-time, the day of harvest will soon be upon us.

These views concerning the nature and origin of eternal suffering we venture to affirm are at once scriptural and rational, and they make sin more terrible and God more loveable.

The hideous pictures that a certain school of *religionists* have drawn of the torments of the lost, and *the means* devised by God for the purpose of wreaking

upon them His retributive punishments, have hidden the Lord from men. Poor simple souls have been made to be as frightened of God as of sin. Some heathen nations, it is recorded, believe in two gods : one a power for good, and another a power of evil. It is said that they pray more to the evil than the good one, not because they like him better, but because they imagine that unless he is kept in a good humour by presents and flattery he will do them some mischief, while they are sure the other will not under any circumstances. We smile at this, and think what a poor deluded people they are ; and yet the belief of modern Christendom is substantially the same, when it teaches that God the Father created men in happiness, and gave them a law—that this law was perfect, and though man was imperfect, He demanded from him a full obedience ; and that upon the commission of the first sin He cursed the human race, and doomed them to endure an eternal existence in a state of torment, wherein they should be perpetually roasted, yet never consumed. Some ingenious people have essayed to describe the fires of hell, and the complacency with which God regards the writhings of the lost as a fitting penalty to be paid by those who have failed to pay Him due honour.

Not content with detailing horrid tortures inflicted by God upon deliberate and confirmed sinners, these tortures have been spoken of as the just penalty *inflicted upon His transgressors for the sin of Adam* ;

as alike the meed of the sinner of threescore years and of the unbaptized infant ; as equally the lot of transgressors against the light, and of the heathen races who never listened to the story of Jesus' love ; and as attaching as much to the commission of a single act of disobedience as to the accumulated crimes of half a century of perpetual vileness.

To speak of these supposed requirements as the requirements of perfect justice, rendered necessary by the spotless purity of God, who loathes all evil and unbelief, is to caricature the demands of justice, and the world will reap sad results from it. Our ideal of character is that of our God, and how should we like our earthly judges and magistrates to act in such a manner ?

To make men just, they must be taught in the first place that God acts justly ; to make men forgiving, they must be taught that God is forgiving ; to make men merciful, they must be taught that God is merciful ; to make men forbearing, they must be taught that God is forbearing. Our God would be unjust if He punished a man that loathed sin for the sin of his parents ; He would be unforgiving if He asked for anything beyond amendment as the price of being restored to His favour ; He would be unmerciful if He imposed upon men a law that was too perfect for them to keep ; He would be unforgiving if He wielded His almighty power to inflict eternal torment upon His weak *enemies*.

Our God is no tyrant; He allows His subjects the most ample freedom, and their welfare is dear to His heart. He forces no one's allegiance, but the privileges of subjects can only be given to those who have in heart acknowledged His right to rule. He banishes none from His kingdom, but when His royal proclamation summons all to fight against the sin that threatens their safety and peace, these aliens having no wish to engage in such a service, separate themselves from the loyal followers of the Lord of Hosts, and ask Who is the Lord that we should obey Him? This is the attitude of God as our King; He seeks to win men by the fervour of His love, and will not force them by the weight of His power.

The doctrine of the eternity of hell has been rendered horrible mainly by the traditions of men teaching their own notions instead of the views contained in the Word of God.

Take away the idea that the punishment of hell is the arbitrary award of God; dispel the notion that the smallest offence merits hell as much as the largest (a teaching that makes the sinner reckless); destroy the very thought of children suffering for lack of baptism, and heathens for lack of belief, and the main points at which our minds revolt disappear. No encouragement whatever is given to laxity of life, but, on the contrary, we see that it is sin itself which we must fear, and not merely some punishment that may be hereafter allotted for it. Hell loses none of its terror to the

sinner, but, on the contrary, punishment is the more galling when self-inflicted, and the bad man has no one to blame but himself. And the thought of hell as an eternal home will act as a more powerful deterrent than the contemplation thereof as a temporary abode. Many a young man on the verge of manhood, gazing into the future, would fain have his fill of the alluring fruits of sinful pleasures, but the thought of the future, the eternal future, causes him to pause, and he resolves to refrain. The fear of hell is not an exalted motive, but it is the only motive that can deter some men from sin, just as the thought of the jail and the gallows alone deter many from crime. It is not an exalted motive, but it may ultimately prove the stepping-stone to higher ones.

And, more than all, the view we have advanced cleanses the dark stains that the prejudices of human painters have fixed upon the picture revealed to us of the spotless purity of the Lord our God. We should believe nothing that dishonours God, by attributing to Him conduct and passions that would disgrace humanity. We cannot too jealously spurn every notion that degrades Deity, and we cannot picture Him as too free from the attributes of anger, and vengeance, and similar tokens of frailty. It were easier, indeed,

“To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper light
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish.”

A man's love is his life, and if there is a life beyond grave, there must be an abode of woe to be the spectacle of those who have lived only in and for evil. To admit the possibility of an entire change of character in the next world tends to foster habits of immorality here, and induces the deferring of the time of repentance. But the Word teaches us that the present life is the season of repentance, and that a time will come when the door will be closed against us, if we neglect to procure for ourselves the love ere the midnight cry that calls us from this world to summon us to our home. It seems to us that the whole tenor of Bible teaching is against the idea of repentance in the life to come, and thus its tendency is to promote virtue on earth. That teaching which tends to repress vice and encourage virtue must be the most truthful, because the most Godlike ; and the view of the lot of the wicked which we have been to lay before you to-night we lay this claim.

“ Days and moments quickly flying,
Blend the living with the dead ;
Soon will you and I be lying
Each within his narrow bed.
Soon our souls to God who gave them
Will have sped their rapid flight ;
Able now by grace to save them,
Oh, that while we can we might.
Jesu, Infinite Redeemer,
Maker of this mighty frame,
Teach, O teach us to remember
What we are, and whence we came ;
Whence we came, and whither wending.

Soon we must through darkness go,
To inherit bliss unending,
Or eternity of woe.
As the tree falls, so must it lie ;
As the man lives, so will he die ;
As the man dies, such must he be,
All through the days of eternity."

LECTURE III.

THE SAVIOUR'S DIVINITY.

"What think ye of Christ?"—MATT. xxii. 42.

THE name of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, is the name which more than all others evokes the veneration of the civilized world; and yet few men living at the time of His life in the flesh dare have predicted such a result. For nearly nineteen hundred years the knowledge of Him has been gradually extending, and millions of souls have regarded Him as their chief treasure in life and in death. His life stands before the world as the model life of humanity—it was a life of toil and trouble and shame for the sake of others. His words display the purity and wisdom of the speaker, and plainly point out the way of life everlasting; and wherever they have been carried they have found warm-hearted listeners, who would sooner part with every earthly possession than one of those lessons of love. His name has been the watchword of human progress; education and civilization have ever resulted where it has been revered; before it kings have quailed; for *it men have shed their last drop of blood in the field,*

on the scaffold, at the stake ; in its service the mightiest intellects and the most loving hearts of earth have toiled incessantly. The love of Jesus Christ and the acceptance of His religion are not dependent upon ignorance and superstition ; for where Christianity has not found men educated it has laboured to make them so. More men have learned to read in order that they might read the Bible than for any other purpose or inducement. The only way by which we can account for the mighty hold which Jesus Christ has taken upon the world is, that His system meets a want of which the world stood in need. He came to save the world from sin and misery, and to elevate its moral and mental character.

When He was born into the world, the nation among whom He came were expecting the advent of a Saviour to deliver and to rule them. But He was born among the poor and lowly ones of earth, and the eyes of the people were looking towards the abodes of the rich and noble. Hence, when He grew up to manhood and began to preach and to teach and to work as the Christ, the people among whom He laboured refused to acknowledge Him as the promised one. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He lived a life of poverty, and died a death of shame. But now, the mere mention of Him evokes in every land wherein His Gospel proclamation has been issued feelings of loving and *admiring devotion* ; the heart of humanity is touched

by the recital of His deeds of mercy and words of wisdom.

And yet among those that have loved Him through all manner of trials and vicissitudes ; among those who have looked to Him as their only refuge from trouble, and their only hope of salvation, many differences of opinion have arisen as to His nature and the relationship in which He stands to the world. Views the most diverse and antagonistic have been from time to time enunciated ; and the study of Him who came to be a bond of union between God and men, and between man and man, has often been carried on in a spirit of bitter strife. Some of the most early controversies that agitated the Church were upon the subject of the exact position in which the Saviour stands to the Church, and many have been the charges and counter charges of heresy hurled at each other by opposing partizans.

It will not be necessary for us to enter into details concerning the various stages of the dispute ; it will be sufficient for our present purpose to merely note the condition in which it stands now.

The more generally received view is that of Tripersonalism ; the belief that the Godhead consists of three equal Persons, each of whom is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but One. God the Creator, Jesus the Saviour, and the Holy Ghost the Comforter, form the Trinity of Persons in the doctrines of the *Greek, Romish, and Protestant Churches generally.*

The idea that has generally been regarded as the opposite of this is the doctrine of Unitarianism—One God, the Father, and that Jesus Christ is not to be worshipped as God, but to be revered as a divine messenger sent to awaken the world to a sense of its sins. This view has been very ably advocated, and quite recently public attention has been directed to it, owing to the fact that the Rev. C. Voysey has been teaching this and other views considered to be contrary to the articles of belief.

The line of argument taken up by Mr. Voysey is the strongest that we have ever seen upon that side of the subject. He endeavours to show that the expressions, "God in Christ," "Son of God," "God manifest in the flesh," do not imply that Jesus is really God. We cannot better discuss the subject of the Saviour's divinity than by examining his views and line of argument.

The teaching of Mr. Voysey upon the subject of the divinity of the Saviour is—so far as we can gather it from among the somewhat hazy expressions that he uses—to this effect. In the degree that there is anything good and true in man, God is in man, and God was in Christ in a more marked manner than in other men, because He was of so much more exalted character than the common level of humanity.

The great object that Mr. Voysey has had in view throughout the course of his teaching, he expresses in *relation to this branch of his subject in the following*

—“It is absurd to suppose that I recognize no difference between ourselves and Him, when we are surrounded on every side and in every land by conditions the most awful between man and man. Let any man call to mind the very best and the very worst man he ever heard of. No one can question the enormous difference of the conditions of these men during their lives. If you call one a son of God, you might call the other a son of the devil; but if we learn anything at all from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we must admit that these differences, awful though they be, are differences too vast for the Almighty love of God to bridge over in time and in the world to come; so that in some instances the “last shall be first, and the first last.” And this hope is borne out by those promises of Scripture, which affirm that God is our Father, the Father of the soul of the most degraded type of human character, and the Father also of the soul of another as grossly depraved. In no way did I mean to drag down Jesus Christ to the level of common humanity. I only intended to raise up hopes of penitent sinners, and to awaken the consciences of the hardened by declaring that God had, in setting the Divine nature in us all, placed us on the level from which we shall one day rise to the stature of the fulness of Christ.’ The incarnation of God in Christ has, I think, been falsely taken to mean that God is generally absent. To the world God is a God afar off, and all my attack was

directed against this idea. In regard to the incarnation of God in Christ, I have never said anything except in affirmation of it. I have taken up and used it as an accepted fact, in order to base upon it certain reasonings about the rest of mankind. I have not contradicted myself that I am aware of. My language has only been in some places more clear and definite than in others. As, for instance, when I speak of 'isolated' instances of incarnation, I am then referring to the implied denial that God is ever near to men and dwells in the hearts of His children. To suppose that God was only on earth and near to men during the thirty-three years of the life of Jesus is rank infidelity."

Thus we see Mr. Voysey denies that Jesus Christ is very God, asserting that He is only Divine in the same manner as we are, though in a greater degree by virtue of His superior moral character. With the object of shewing that God is ever near to man we concur; but we very much question whether the denial of the Godhead of the Saviour is the best way to maintain it.

Further, that Jesus Christ was a man, and that as such He bore an intimate relationship to all other men, we would not wish to question for a moment. The knowledge that our Saviour was a man is one that must tend powerfully to bind our hearts to Him with a feeling of kinship, in that "we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our *infirmities*, but was in all points tempted like as we are." *Indeed, the Apostle Paul insists most strongly on the*

humanity of Jesus Christ. "For, verily, He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Jesus Christ was most truly a man—a model, because a most perfect man. But we believe that the Scriptures present evidence to convince us that Jesus was more than a man, quite as strongly as that which convinces us of His manhood—to our view they are equally plain in teaching that He is Very God and Very Man.

It is in entire harmony with the human side of His being that He should "increase in wisdom and in stature;" that He should be tempted with alluring offers; that He should feel the anguish of suffering and despair, and leave the world by the gate of death; that He should have been circumcised in His infancy; that He should have been baptized in His manhood; that He should keep the passover; and that He should pray with and for His people. He came into the world, lived in it, and left it—as a man. But all through His career we find the record of events that betoken the presence of another nature far above the level of humanity. It is the glory of Deity veiled in flesh that we see when we gaze upon the features of Jesus Christ. For instance, the events that preceded and accompanied His birth testify most strongly to His Divinity. He is called "Emmanuel, God with us." To Mary and to Joseph the angel gave the command *that "thou shall call His name Jesus, for He shall*

save His people from their sins ;” and to the shepherds His birth was announced in these terms—“ Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Let us try to realize the full meaning involved in these declarations that Jesus was the Saviour. The prophetic writings of the Jews had often spoken of the Saviour. “ I, even I, am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Saviour :” “ A just God, and a Saviour; there is none beside Me :” “ Come unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else,” was the language of Jehovah God delivered through the prophets, speaking of salvation as the work of God alone. When therefore Jesus is declared by the angel to be the Saviour, it is a declaration of His identity with Jehovah. It is not spoken of as a work delegated to Him by God, but as a work done by Jesus for “ *His* people,” THE PEOPLE OF JESUS. The Saviour’s birth proclaimed by the angel was therefore the assumption of humanity by God Himself; and this too had been promised in ancient times. “ Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” The place of the birth of this promised *One* had also been given. “ But thou, Bethlehem *Ephratah*, though thou be little among the thousands

of Judah, out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth have been from of old, even from everlasting." It was at Bethlehem that Jesus was born, whither the angels directed the shepherds, and the expounders of the Scriptures directed the wise men of the East who came to worship the new-born King.

It has sometimes been urged, that to assume that Jesus is God because He is spoken of as a Saviour is to carry the argument too far, because other men spoken of in the Scriptures are called *saviours*. But the objection is more powerful in appearance than in reality. The "saviours" spoken of in the Old Testament were the men that had saved the nation from the oppressors according to the flesh ; but Jesus is spoken of as a Saviour in another sense altogether. He came to save men from their spiritual oppressors ; "to destroy the works of the devil ;" "to save His people from their sins." And in this He is altogether without a compeer. "There is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved," says the Apostle, and if we compare this saying with that of prophecy, —"I, even I, am Jehovah, and beside Me there is no Saviour," the conclusion of the Divinity of Jesus Christ seems irresistible, and we are impelled with Jude to ascribe "glory and majesty, dominion and power, unto Him for ever and ever," as "the only wise God, our Saviour."

And are we not led to a similar conclusion when

we consider the nature of the mission of John the Baptist, who was sent to bear witness of the Lord and the light and life of the world? John said—"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord (Jehovah), as said the prophet Esaias;" and Jesus Christ was the one who, coming after him, was preferred before him. Thus Jesus and Jehovah are one—for the "Word was God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld Him as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The first chapter of John's Gospel appears to us to contain incontrovertible proof of the Saviour's Divinity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the light was the life of men. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness to bear witness of the light; . . . he was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world;" and so on—all plainly referring to Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh, and "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." What can be plainer than teaching of this character—that prophecy declared that one should arise as the herald to prepare a way *for the Lord Jehovah*, and that in coming as the mes-

senger of Jesus Christ, John fulfilled the prophecy? And again, that "the Word was God, and was made flesh, and dwelt among us" in the person of Jesus Christ. This brings us to the position taken up by Mr. Voysey in the words we have previously quoted, in which the full meaning of scriptural statements appears to us to be evaded. It is said that God is manifested in the flesh in every man who has received of His spirit; that all men are God's children; that God dwells in all men; that the Saviour is our brother; that His union with God consisted in that unity of sympathy and endeavour to which we also are directed by Him.

But just as in respect to His office of Saviour He stands alone, so in all the respects just alluded to we may realize a discrete difference. The terms are applied to Him in quite a different sense to what they are applied to us. For instance, men are called sons of God, and it is written, "To them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." But Jesus Christ's Sonship is of another sort altogether. He is called "The *ONLY begotten* Son of God." We become sons of God through the medium of the second birth (of regeneration); but He was born into the world as such; as the angel predicted to the Virgin—"The holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Again, it is written that "all men are brethren." And *He is called our brother*; but we are not born in the

brotherly relation to him : it is a state that must be attained through the medium of obedience. "My brethren are those which hear the Word of God and do it."

Again, we are commanded to be "one," even as He and the Father are one ; but man can no more hope to attain to this complete unity than he can to reach the state recommended in the words, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Indeed, unity is dependent upon similarity of disposition ; and though men may unite with each other, they can only be completely united with God as they reach to a state of perfection. "But there is none perfect, no, not one." Yet Jesus Christ declares His complete unity with the Father. We would not press the idea that the declaration, "I and the Father are one," establishes the personal identity of the Father and the Son ; but at the least it shews us that Jesus occupies a position to which no created being can by any possibility attain.

Further : it is declared that God dwells in us, but it is never said of one of us, "He that seeth Me seeth the Father ;" or "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." No human being can contain the fulness of the Godhead bodily, though of that fulness they may receive spiritually.

Similarly we should conclude from the declaration, "As the Father knoweth the Son, even so know I the *Father* ;" and from the further assertions, "All things

that the Father hath are Mine," and "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth," that Jesus is God as well as man. To know as God knows, to possess all that God possesses, to wield all existing power, are the attributes of Deity alone.

The conclusion to which we have arrived in reading the Bible teachings is, that either Jesus Christ is God, or that He is no fitting example for us, since, if He be not God, he puts forward claims for the possession of honours that belong only to God.

For example : He calls Himself "the Bread of Life." He says, "My words are spirit, and they are life." He assumes to be "the Resurrection and the Life," and makes the stupendous announcement, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Words like these in the mouth of a creature are words of presumption and blasphemy—they belong only to the great Creator, in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." If Jesus was entitled to use them, He is our God.

Again : He not only declares that all power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth ; He says also, "Without Me ye can do nothing." He likens Himself to a living vine, and His disciples to the branches, drawing thence their nourishment and support. In the mouth of a mere man such words would be words of empty and wicked boasting, for we cannot suppose that God would divest Himself of His power, or make another being equal to Himself. "Thus saith the Lord, *He that created the heavens, and stretched them out ;*

He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it ; He that giveth bread unto people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein ; . . . I am the Lord, that is My name ; and My glory will I not give to another." If, then, Jesus was not arrogating to Himself power that He did not possess—He must be God.

Again : "Ye have one Master, even Christ, and all men are brethren." "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am." Now, unless Jesus possessed another nature besides His human one, in thus exalting Himself above all other men and accepting the title of Master and Lord, He was guilty of a departure from that spirit of humility which He so frequently inculcated to others. But as we cannot suppose that He would so belie His own lessons, we must believe Him to be God as well as man.

Again : He told His disciples that whatsoever they should ask in His name He would do it ; and yet the power of answering prayer is one of the attributes exclusively God's. He accepted the worship of men while the angel mentioned in the Book of Revelation refused it, saying, "See thou do it not : I am thy fellow-servant : worship God." Both these considerations impel us to the belief that either Jesus claimed and accepted the honour due to another, or that these honours are His, and He is God.

We might easily multiply instances and incidents of *this character*, but the idea having been started, each

ay by searching the Scriptures which testify of
ind much testimony in this direction, and it is
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ms the indwelling of the Divinity itself.

prayed as a man should pray to God ; but this is
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sojourn—to live for others. He was baptized
example's sake ; “suffer it to be so now, for
becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” He
addressed the Father, and an audible voice
; but it was not for His sake, but for the sake of
hat stood by, that the voice came. And so also
tion to the exercise of prayer ; it was a duty
e had expressly enjoined upon His disciples,
efore He, as their great example, following out
own commandments, prayed to the Divinity
Himself. Indeed, His existence in this world
ped as an existence by itself, from the fact that
voluntary, in furtherance of a pre-natal project.
not come into the world of ourselves, we are
to choose our parents and the nature into
we are born. And therefore, altogether apart
e account of the miraculous conception of the

Lord in the womb of a virgin, we have in the passage from Paul quoted a short time ago, a most important ground of argument. "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren;" and in a preceding verse, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." These expressions, "He took on Him," "it behoved Him to be made," "He took part of the same," are utterly meaningless, unless we admit the superhuman nature and the pre-natural existence of Jesus Christ. This is His own teaching. "Before Abraham was, I am;" a remark which caused the Jews to take up stones to stone Him for blasphemy, but which should induce the receivers of His testimony to adore Him as their Saviour God.

Thus we see that He was not only different to other men in the *degree* of His virtue, but in His very nature. And this idea is further illustrated in the Scriptures. Jesus Himself taught that He was greater than Solomon and Jonah, and the Apostle also shews Him to be superior to Moses, and explains that the difference between the two was an essential difference in kind. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul writes, "For every house is builded by some man; but He *that built all things* is God. And Moses verily was

faithful in all his house, as a servant, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we," &c.

So far we have endeavoured to view the subject of the Divinity of the Saviour from the standpoint naturally suggested by the remarks of Mr. Voysey, with the intention of shewing that the manifestation or incarnation of God in Christ is not of the kind implied.

It appears to us that the evidence of Scripture conclusively demonstrates that Jesus is God, and the only God of heaven and earth. This is apparent from the manner in which He speaks of Himself as the source of life and of power, and from the teaching of the scripture that He is the Saviour of men.

We can only recognize God by His attributes and His works, and we find that the Bible accords to Jesus Christ all the attributes and works which are the exclusive right and possession of Deity.

The first great work of God is that of creation. Jesus Christ is the Creator. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made;" and again, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible : all things were created by Him, and for Him : and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." These words surely were here, by the Apostle, uttered concerning the occupant of the throne of heaven, before whom the elders fell *down and worshipped*, casting their crowns at His feet,

and saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power : for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

The next great work of God is salvation. We have seen that Jesus is the Saviour: "He shall save His people from their sins." He was no delegate; He came Himself to save His people; and "there is no other name under heaven whereby men may be saved."

The third great work of God is providence or preservation. It is upon Jesus that we depend for life and the satisfaction of our spiritual wants. "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" "Without Me ye can do nothing;" "Because I live, ye shall live also;" "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." These are the chief works of God—of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, in relation to the chief attributes of Deity, namely, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Is not omnipotence implied in the words, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth?" Can we have a more distinct and conclusive proof of omniscience than we find in the declarations: "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man;" "He knew their thoughts." And what stronger evidence of omnipresence can we have than that supplied in the teaching: "No man hath ascended into heaven, save He *that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man*

who is in heaven?" and the promises, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them;" "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world?" It is in similar terms—and more direct expressions are impossible—that the prophets described the glory of Jehovah-God, always asserting that He was without equal, much less superior.

The only logical conclusion to be drawn is therefore, that Jesus Christ the Saviour is none other than Jehovah God in human form, and that the Child born and the Son given is in very truth "the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father;" or again, to quote from the apostle, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

And if Jesus be our God, what need have we for another. He created us, He saves us, He preserves us, He is our all in all. The idea of the existence of two other Divine Persons, separate and distinct from Jesus Christ, seems to us altogether untenable. There is nothing that any other Divine Person can do for us. The Trinity in God is like the trinity in man—a trinity of soul, body, and energy, in ONE Person. That Person is Jesus Christ; His humanity was the Son, His essential nature was the Divine Father—"the Father that dwelleth in Me"—and His spirit of power *the Holy Ghost*; for after He was risen again, "He

breathed on His disciples, saying, Receive ye *the Holy Ghost.*"

This idea of the Trinity being centred in Jesus Christ is confirmed by the formula of Scripture baptism. The Lord commanded His disciples to go "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In the subsequent career of the early Christian Church, we read that, when the Apostles baptized, they did so in the name of Jesus, and hence we must believe either that they did not follow out the command given unto them, or that the name of Jesus is the one that includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We also read that the miracles wrought by the Apostles were wrought in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and that they regarded faith in Him as the great essential of salvation.

For a human being to be spoken of as Jesus Christ is spoken of would be rank blasphemy and idolatry, but if we regard Him as very God and very man, as the one God clothed in the vestments of humanity for the purpose of saving the world from the cursed power of sin, all our difficulties vanish, and we are constrained to join in the expression of joy uttered by the angels: "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a *Saviour*, which is Christ the Lord." No other view *of the nature* of the Saviour of men can give us such a

and exalted view of God as this. The great God
 in a man—the universal Master became a servant.
 Hearts should love to cling to such a loving and
 cent Father, who shewed Himself so desirous of
 ing and cementing a union between His creatures,

assume their nature, that it might in Him be
 perfect, and a way might be opened for all men
 saved. No theory of delegated or transferred
 can equal this, or furnish us with so powerful an
 ive to reciprocate a love so boundless and all-
 ing. “He looked, and there was none to help ;
 ondered that there was no intercessor : therefore
 own arm brought salvation unto Him, and His
 ousness it sustained Him. In His love and in
 ity He redeemed them, and He bare them and
 d them in His bosom, all the days of old.”

l this view, that God, clothed in humanity, lived
 earth during a period of thirty-three years, does
 necessarily imply, as Mr. Voysey seems to imagine,
 ince that time God has been absent from the

. The Saviour's last promise, as recorded in the
 el according to Matthew, is, “Lo, I am with you
 , even to the end of the world.”

us Christ is ever with us. “Behold, I stand at the
 and knock ; if any man will hear My voice, and
 the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with
 and he with Me.” Jesus Christ invites the weary
 eavy laden to come unto Him, that they may find
 nto their souls : let us with Peter exclaim, “Lord,

to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Jesus our Saviour can supply every longing of the heart of man; He can do all for us that we need. And in worshipping Him, we no longer "worship we know not what: we know whom we worship." No longer the blind devotees of an unknown God, we can intelligently bow before an Incarnate Deity—no longer blinded by the cry of mystery, which is always the resort of error, we see the mystery revealed in that "God was manifested in the flesh."

The professing Christian Church described in the Word as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, must only have one husband, if she would be deemed faithful to her Spouse. He is the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the Church would be really active and living, filled with energetic vitality, she must regard Jesus Christ as her real Head, and not merely as her nominal one. He is to the Church what the human head is to the human body, and not merely a man from whom the Church derives its name and its doctrines (as the Calvinists derive theirs from Calvin). "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Jesus Christ stands alone. He Himself invites us to labour for His sake; and yet the only perfect Being is God, and God alone is the origin of all our blessings, whether mediate or immediate. The world would lose its most precious thought if it relinquished its belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ. By refusing Him *the honour of undivided Deity*, they have deteriorated

worth and its beauty ; but the time is at hand when
y will realize more completely that He only is
e Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the
d, the First and the Last, Who is and Who was,
l Who is to come, the Almighty."

LECTURE IV.

RATIONALISM.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."

ISA. i. 18.

THE possession of reason is one of the characteristics which separates man from the brute creation. By its aid we are enabled to form some idea of the unseen, and perpetually to increase our knowledge of the manifold uses of created things. The value of reason, and the duty of exercising it in matters of a social and scientific character, cannot be questioned; for where reason is not developed, the mind remains in ignorance, if it does not even fall into idiotcy. The greater and more important the themes are which enlightened reason investigates, the grander are the results which such investigations are likely to produce for the good of humanity. This is admitted on all hands in so far as mundane matters are concerned. Yet, strange to say, attempts have been made to shew that spiritual things lie altogether beyond the province of reason, and the idea has become very prevalent that reason and religion are *antagonistic*.

The exercise of human reason in the examination of religious subjects has been vetoed, under the idea that God and heaven, and the human soul, are inscrutable mysteries, incapable of being understood by man, and that faith is matter of authority rather than of evidence. To us it seems to be a most dangerous maxim, which demands that the belief of the masses should be dependent upon the dictum of the heads of the Church. Upon this principle faith becomes not a faith in the views adopted, but a faith in the credibility of their propounders. The definition of faith given by the Apostle Paul completely refutes a doctrine of this kind. He declares "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the *evidence* of things not seen;"¹ and if faith is a matter of evidence, every individual must examine that evidence for himself, and he can only do so by means of his reason. If reason is to be ignored, what is the meaning of "the right of private judgment," which is one of the boasts of Protestantism? But a greater than Paul testifies to the fact that faith is not a blind credence. Jesus Christ our Saviour, in His exposition of the Parable of the Sower, made this important statement—"When any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom, *and understandeth it not*, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart"²—shewing that there can be no enduring faith without understanding.

It is true that the Scriptures speak of "mysteries,"

¹ Heb. ii. 1.

² Matt. xiii. 19.

but not with the view of stifling inquiry, or suggesting that man can know nothing of the subjects spoken of, but rather as an incentive to the soul so to prepare itself as to come into a state wherein it may acquire some knowledge of them. This much we may gather from the Lord when explaining the reason of His speaking to the multitude in parables. "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."¹

It is also true that man can never *fully* fathom the nature of the Supreme Being ; *but he may know in part, and only in the degree that he can understand can he really believe.* Investigation can never harm truth, and those who decry against the most ample scrutiny in regard to the doctrines they hold or teach, must evidently be afraid of something. If we are able to believe the prophet Isaiah upon this topic, God calls for the exercise of reason upon spiritual things—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."² This invitation is an important one and should convince us that there is no need for us to let one of our noblest faculties lie dormant when considering the most mighty themes that human thought can dwell upon.

In our days reason has achieved such stupendous results in science and literature and commerce, tha

¹ Matt. xiii. 11.

² Isa. i. 18.

men now ask, Why ignore reason in religion? The question is a pertinent one, and cannot be dealt with as in past times. The reply of mystery does not possess the power it once did—men are not now so much disposed to admit the authority of other people to speak for them—they are not willing now to enact in real life the children's game of "open your mouth and shut your eyes, and see what a good thing I'll give you," taking the chances of the gift being a stone instead of bread.

A new school of thought has arisen in our midst under the name of Rationalism. Its position is, that man reason and conscience are the best and safest guides in spiritual things—it ignores the idea of an infallible revelation, and demands that religious views should be formed like scientific ones, upon purely rational grounds. This is a bold thought, and might well create confusion and alarm among the upholders of blind faith.

Rationalism is the very antithesis of popular religious thought, and, like all extremes, requires to be very carefully examined before we can be justified in accepting it. In our opinion, it is the rebound of human thought from its imprisonment, and like all rebounds has been carried farther than it can permanently settle.

You will already have gathered that we do not pre-empt the use of reason in our inquiries after *religious truth*, but we are unable altogether to adopt

the platform of modern rationalism. We will try to explain why.

We believe that human reason and conscience ALONE are *unsafe* guides in relation to morality and kindred topics. Human nature now exists in a perverted state, and our hereditary inclinations are towards the things that are evil. Hence our intellectual faculties are distorted and our consciences blunted. We reason from ourselves and from appearances, we naturally seek for arguments to justify our deeds and gratify our inclinations, and motives of interest and pleasure too often warp our moral judgment. We should therefore hesitate, lest we place too much reliance upon the results of our own reasoning.

Again: we cannot reason without a basis, or premises from whence to argue. In relation to physical objects, the primary basis of reasoning is the appearance presented to our bodily senses. In intellectual matters, we must reason from premises—as for instance, geometrical reason would be impossible unless the axioms and definitions of Euclid were admitted to be correct, while it would be impossible to teach mathematics to a pupil who denied that $2 \times 2 = 4$, or that $x + x + y = 2x + y$. Thus physical subjects require a physical basis of reasoning, and intellectual topics require an intellectual basis.

So also our reasonings upon spiritual subjects must *have a spiritual* basis. A sound spiritual basis is not *inherent in the humanity* of our day; and nature,

which is altogether material, cannot furnish us with one. Without instruction, man would know nothing of God as a Being of Infinite Love and Wisdom, of heaven as the future home of the just, of the soul as an immortal part of our being; and hence we contend that spiritual knowledge must originally have been revealed from a higher source. The basis of true Rationalism is "Come now, and let us reason *together*, saith the Lord." Our duty is not to ignore reason altogether, nor to rely upon it alone, but to reason with the Lord. This can only be done by uniting reason with revelation.

But "can two walk together except they be agreed?" As we have remarked, the reasonings of our natural state are altogether fallacious, and hence human reason requires to be enlightened ere it can be brought into unison with revelation. We can only clearly discern spiritual truth in the degree that our spiritual vision is free from defilement—the defilement that proceeds from the love of evil within the heart. How can a man reason correctly if in his heart he "call evil good and good evil, putting darkness for light and light for darkness?"¹ The thing is a manifest impossibility, and all human experience assents to the saying of our Lord—"The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore

¹ Isa. v. 20.

the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"¹

True rationality concerning the things of God and of heaven can only exist in man in the degree that his heart and mind are influenced by good and truth. Other rationalism terminates in unbelief—either in the cold denials of Atheism, or the shadowy theories of Deism. It is a bold step for a man to reject all light save that which springs up within his own mind, thus constituting himself the final judge between truth and error, right and wrong, when it is so very apparent that feeling often overpowers the judgment. We do not wish men to accept theological dogmas blindly, but we do ask them to see that their eyes are opened, and the films of vice removed ere they venture to wage war against revealed religion. It is no unworthy prayer to ask—"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."²

If nature cannot prove to us the existence of God and heaven and our own souls, together with the great object of our life, and the means by which that object may be attained, surely a good God must have given to us a more certain guide from Himself. *Revelation is a necessity to those who, conscious of their own ignorance and sinfulness, cry, "Send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me, and let them bring me to Thy holy hill."*³

A great distinction seems to have been almost lost

¹ Matt. vi. 22, 23.

² Psal. cxix. 18.

³ Psal. xliii. 3.

sight of in the talk about rationalism. We allude to that between reason and reasonings. *Reason* viewed abstractedly is of Divine origin, and consequently orderly and calculated to tend to the elucidation of truth. But *our reasonings* are human, oft leading us to the most erroneous and *unreasonable* conclusions.

The correctness of our reasonings depends mainly upon—1. Our mental and moral state; and 2. Our premises.

Concerning spiritual things a religious man will reason devoutly, a moral man will reason morally, a practical man will reason practically, a selfish man will reason selfishly, and a sensual man will reason sensually. It is impossible for us not to be biassed in this respect. For the sake of illustration, let us suppose that a man of each of the above named classes were considering the value of the golden rule—"Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you." The truly religious man would ask himself how far the working of this rule would promote the love of God and the welfare of man; the moral man would consider how far it would conduce to orderly life in the world; the practical man would examine its practicability, and the advantages or disadvantages that might arise from its activity; the selfish man would seek to know whether he would be able to gain more by it than he would lose; and the sensual man would inquire how it would affect the gratification of his *desires and inclinations*. And proceeding from these

various standpoints (or moral premises), though the reasoning might be very logical in all cases, the conclusions would be very different.

And so in regard to our intellectual premises. If these are founded only in what appears to our senses, we are not likely to deduce spiritual truths. If we acknowledge no power superior to nature, if we believe nature to be infinite and self-existent, and governed by fixed laws originating in itself, and if we argue from these as axioms, we shall never be likely to understand anything about spiritual things. The more we reason the farther we shall get from the truth, and the more irrational will be our conclusions.

Evidently, then, the rationalism that we want is an "enlightened" rationalism, and not that which spontaneously rises in the minds of people born in ignorance. All human experience teaches us that we need a light superior to our own to direct us amid the dangers and troubles of life, and what safer light can we have than a written revelation of the Divine will?

Christendom believes that the Bible is this revelation in which "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."¹ The "new school of thought" do not admit this position at all.

The Rev. C. Voysey, who may be considered a fair representative of rationalism, contends that the Bible cannot be the infallible Word of God, because it contains sentiments opposed to the discoveries of modern

¹ 2 Pet. i. 21.

science, sentiments opposed to each other, and sentiments that are immoral in their tendency ; he also contends that it has no more claim to divine authority than the Koran or the Vedas ; and yet he tells us that "in one sense it is the best book in the world." Before examining the correctness of his allegations against the Bible, and the weight they are entitled to, let us just briefly comment upon this latter statement—"in one sense it is the best book in the world." We cannot understand how one believing the charges that Mr. Voysey makes against the Bible can conscientiously hold such an opinion,—it looks like a sentiment thrown in to tone down the harshness of the criticism, and for that purpose alone ; for Mr. Voysey gives us no clue as to what that "one sense is."

Is an unscientific, contradictory, and immoral book the best book in the world? If the allegations of rationalism are true, we pity their system if it is not able to produce a book without these drawbacks. Unless it is the Word of God it is not a good book at all, but an imposture, for it claims to be written by men professing to have had direct revelation from the Most High. How often we read, "The word of the Lord came to me saying"—"Thus saith the Lord," and similar expressions ; and if these statements are not true, then the book bears false witness, and is unworthy of respect by the lovers of truth and right.

But how far are these charges of immorality, &c., true? And if true, how do they affect the authority of

the Bible as the revelation of the divine will to man in spiritual things?

"Many expressions of the Bible are in direct antagonism to modern science." Granted. But the Bible does not claim to be a scientific authority, and we may readily see that there would be no occasion for a divine revelation concerning science, since men may discover scientific truths from the study of nature alone. Hence the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."¹ Scientific inaccuracy cannot militate against this purpose, and consequently cannot be regarded as a valid allegation against the authority of the Bible. The objection is an ill-considered one. Science has made rapid strides since the days of Moses and the prophets; but what do we really *know* about the primary forces of nature? It is probable, if not certain, that the views held three thousand years hence will be as far in advance of the views of to-day as ours are in advance of those of three thousand years ago; and that if *the truth* upon many scientific problems were declared in our hearing now, we should unhesitatingly reject it, and look upon the person declaring it as a promising candidate for *Bedlam*. The unscientificity of the Bible is not

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

inconsistent with the idea of its being a divine revelation. It contained the science of the age in which it was given : had it contained any other it would doubtless have been at once rejected. If we believe that God is good, we must also believe that in revealing Himself to His creatures, He will accommodate that revelation to their state, and that whatever its intrinsic nature may be, its external form will be adapted to the people and the age in which it is first given. The external statements of the Bible are to be regarded rather as the form than the substance of divine revelation—to gather its highest lessons we must study the spirit as well as the letter of Holy Writ.

In reference to the contradictory nature of various Bible statements, we think they are more in appearance than reality. Similar contradictions appear in the world of nature, and yet no true philosopher would argue that the teachings of nature are not to be depended upon. We admit that people on the look-out for contradictory statements will find very many of them ; but we also believe that he who studies them carefully and candidly will discover that there is a means of harmonizing them. For instance, we find various passages concerning the character of God in which He is described as a Being of unchangeable Love ; and various other passages which speak of His anger and wrath and vengeance. The Bible itself provides the means for reconciling this apparent contradiction. “With the merciful Thou wilt shew Thy-

self merciful ; with an upright man Thou wilt shew Thyself upright ; with the pure Thou wilt shew Thyself pure ; and with the froward Thou wilt shew Thyself froward."¹ By thus revealing Himself to different classes of men, the Lord is able to exert an influence upon all. Judging from what we know of the Jews as a selfish, sensual, and obstinate people, we may see the necessity for this adaptation. A God all love would be to them a God to be despised, whose commandments might be broken with impunity. God is a terrible God to wicked men, who will necessarily think Him to be such an one as themselves ; and hence the genuine teaching of Scripture needed to be veiled in accommodation to their carnal minds. The God idea must, on the one hand, be one that can be appreciated by the people to whom it is given ; and on the other hand, one calculated to stimulate virtue and progress. Unless the varied mental capacities of men were provided for in a divine revelation, it would be a dead letter to many ; and as it is intended to affect varied and even opposite states, it must present at the first glance varied and even opposite teachings. Hence the great lessons concerning God given to the Jews were concerning His wisdom, power, and majesty ; and the great lesson of life was, that He punishes all who transgress His laws.

To have told them that God's love never changes *whatever man* does against Him, that the punishment

¹ Psa. xviii. 25, 26.

of evil is contained in itself, and that God never can repent of the good He has done in the past, nor forbear doing it in the future, would have called forth from them the thought they might do as they like, and live the life of sensuality which their soul loved. That speaking to the Jews (and through them to all merely natural men) the divine truth was accommodated, may be seen from the following Scripture passages:—
 “For the hardness of your hearts He gave you this precept;”¹ “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;”² “I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither are ye now able. For ye are yet carnal,”³ &c. But though accommodated to *the Jews*, the Bible ever taught the great lessons of human responsibility, the reward of obedience, the penalty of sin. It was rather in reference to the manner of their determination, than in the great facts themselves, that genuine truth was accommodated to the crude states of the people.

It may be objected to this line of argument that God said untrue things. But when viewed in this aspect, they are no more false statements than the assertion that the sun will rise in the morning. Like this latter statement, the literal sense of the Word is so given as to come within the comprehension. He is the wisest teacher that can adapt himself to all; he is the best moral reformer who can reach to the lowest stratum of society.

¹ *Mark x. 5.*² *John xvi. 12.*³ *1 Cor. iii. 1-3.*

We have dwelt thus lengthily upon this subject of the Bible teaching concerning the nature of God, because of its moment.

There is, however, another class of alleged contradictions, such as "The Prince of Peace,"¹ v. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth," &c.² The key to the reconciliation of passages like these is given in the words of Jesus: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."³ The Bible has been viewed in too material an aspect, and its statements have been regarded as referring to material rather than spiritual things. We need not linger upon this part of our subject—a "concordance" will enable any one to see that these so called contradictory passages only need to be compared with other passages referring to the same subject, and the difficulties will at once vanish.

The charge of immorality brought against the Bible we will reserve for a separate consideration. Suffice it to say at present, that though the meaning of the Book is not always apparent—and the same may be said in regard to the great lessons of nature—the more it is studied the clearer it becomes, and the more beneficial is its influence. The open Bible is the world's best guarantee for freedom and progress, and education and morality. Wherever it has been received, civilization has advanced in an unprecedented *ratio*; and we can see no good that is to be attained

¹ Isa. ix. 6.

² Matt. x. 34.

³ John vi. 63.

by lessening our veneration for it, as the divinely inspired guide of man.

The pseudo rationalism that would undermine its authority is pretentious, but very vague. If it believes in a God at all, its God is a power without a personality or form, and it is impossible for human hearts to cling to an unknown God. If it recognizes a life hereafter, it is from a vague hope, and not as a certainty vouched for by the mouth of God Himself. If it believes in a human soul distinct from matter, it can tell us little *positively* about its nature and capabilities. It has no code of life stamped with divine authority. To it the fall is a myth, and the story of redemption is little better than a cunningly devised fable.

It were a sorry bargain to give up "the sure and certain hope" of religion for this mixture of denials and uncertainties. Rationalism is cold and unsatisfying to the *heart* of man; it may appeal powerfully to his understanding, like a brilliant light, but it is a light devoid of that holy warmth which kindles human affection into a fervent heat. The exaltation of reason alone, to the setting aside of faith, is to deprive the world of those higher principles of love which are not hereditary in the heart of man. Reason alone, that is *our* reason alone, is essentially cold and selfish—taking preservation as the first law of nature, and too often regarding self as the only being worth a moment's *consideration*. Where but from the Holy Word can

we learn that love to God and love to other men form our first and highest duties. The upholders of rationalism would do well to ponder over the words of one of the most popular of modern writers, whose works are among our household treasures. In "Oliver Twist," after describing the share which Oliver's companions took in the effort to capture him for the crime that they had themselves committed, the author makes the following reflections:—"That when the Dodger and his accomplished friend Master Bates joined in the hue and cry which was raised at Oliver's heels, in consequence of their executing an illegal conveyance of Mr. Brownlow's personal property, as has been already described, they were actuated by a very laudable and becoming regard for themselves; and forasmuch as the liberty of the individual and the freedom of the subject are among the first and proudest boasts of a true-hearted Englishman, so I need hardly beg the reader to observe that this action should tend to exalt them in the opinion of all public and patriotic men, in almost as great a degree as this strong proof of their anxiety for their own preservation goes to corroborate and confirm the little code of laws which certain profound and sound judging philosophers have laid down as the mainspring of all Nature's deeds and actions: the said philosophers very wisely reducing the good lady's proceedings to matters of maxim and theory; and by a very neat and pretty compliment to *her exalted wisdom* and understanding, putting en-

tirely out of sight any considerations of heart, or generous impulse and feeling. For these are matters totally beneath a female who is acknowledged by universal admission to be far above the numerous little foibles and weaknesses of her sex."¹

We ought truly to be able to "give a reason for the hope that is in us;"² and indeed only in the degree that we rationally comprehend can we have real faith. But in reasoning we must not judge from appearance, we must judge righteous judgment; and we can only judge righteous judgment as the love of right is firmly implanted within us. We can only accept the invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together," in the degree that we submit our minds and hearts to the holy influences of the love and wisdom of heaven.

Religion, Christianity, is the true rationalism; for it is the emanation of the source of all truth, and commends itself to the reason of men by its capability of supplying the wants of human souls, and leading men onward to a higher purity than it could have otherwise conceived.

The death-knell of this "new school of thought" was sounder when one of its "representative men" declared that "rationalism is neither religious nor anti-religious." Everything that is good and true is religious, everything that is evil and false is anti-religious; and it may therefore be said concerning ration-

¹ "Oliver Twist," chap. xii.

² 1 Pet. iii. 15.

alism, as was once written concerning a church of olden time—"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."¹

¹ Rev. iii. 5, 16.

LECTURE V.

THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"—

MATT. xxiii. 13.

THE general grounds of objection taken by Rationalists of the Unitarian School to the divinity of Jesus Christ are those that naturally spring from the fact that He came upon earth clothed in flesh, that He endured bitter temptations, and that He prayed for the help of God ; or briefly, that He lived and died as a man. The admission of His manhood is deemed by them an all-sufficient refutation of His Godhead.

But religious, as distinguished from infidel rationalists, have ever, while denying His Deity, professed the highest veneration for His purity of character as a perfect man, a teacher of truth, and a bright example for all ages—"the light of the world." Indeed, the record given of His career in the narratives of the Gospel, and this is the only detailed biography of Him that we possess, appears to us to render this estimate of Him irresistible. In His own days "He was despised and rejected of men," but then He was looked upon

through the medium of prejudice, a prejudice fostered by the ruling powers whose wickedness and hypocrisy He faithfully rebuked. But such a feeling seems a thing impossible to a soul that loves and admires the good and the true *now*, when we can calmly reflect upon the brief sketch of His career preserved in Holy Writ.

His was pre-eminently a life of love—presented to the world both by precept and example. His exhibitions of extraordinary power were all for the purpose of assuaging human woe and satisfying human wants—all miracles of love. Not only to those who received His teachings and maintained towards Him an attitude of friendship, but for those who mocked His counsel and despised His person, He laboured incessantly. He declared His purpose to be “to seek and to save that which was lost;” and that He might bring about this great result He meekly endured contumely and reproach. What higher conceptions of perfect life and love can man have than those presented in the injunctions: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye also unto them;” and “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love Thy neighbour and hate thy enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.” His life was an embodiment of the command, “Love your enemies,” *to which the world has no compeer*. We cannot find *one expression betokening animosity, one act denoting*

antipathy against individuals in the whole course of His career. But how numerous and brilliant are the illustrations of His unchanging love.

We would fain have thought that He was too holy for reproach, and that no man would have dared to compare Him unfavourably with other men in any respect whatever. But it has been wisely said, "Be thou chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."

Quite recently a representative lecturer of the rationalistic school (it is reported) had the temerity to measure himself by the side of Jesus Christ to his own advantage. This lecturer is reported to have alleged as an argument against the Deity of the Saviour, that He displayed the moral imperfections of man, quoting in support of his allegation the 23d chapter of Matthew to prove that Jesus returned railing for railing, and got angry with His persecutors, while he (the lecturer), though much persecuted, had never retaliated in such a manner. The pretension refutes itself—"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, but he that exalteth himself shall be abased."

For Jesus Christ to have got angry because He was persecuted would have been for Him to have stultified His many lessons of love. It would also be in no sort of harmony with the tenor of His conduct on similar occasions. As for instance, when looking upon the city that had rejected Him, He lamented over *her in the eloquent and never-to-be-forgotten words,*

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Again, when the soldiers came to take Him prisoner, and the zealous Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high-priest's servant, Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Put up thy sword again into his sheath, for he that draws the sword shall perish by the sword;" and He healed the sufferer. Again, note the tenderness of the language addressed to the women who wept at the sight of the mournful procession to Calvary: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children;" and the prayer on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." None of these passages are consistent with the idea that Jesus cherished enmity against those who denied and persecuted Him. And what inference are we to draw from the account given in the 9th chapter of Luke's Gospel: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem; and sent messengers before His face; and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from

heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them"? Surely these are not in any sense consistent with the notion that Jesus could ever display *infirmity of temper*!

But let us proceed to investigate this 23rd chapter of Matthew, and see if it will consistently bear the "rationalistic" interpretation we have alluded to.

Eight times Jesus pronounced a "woe" upon the Scribes and Pharisees. Why? Because they had opposed Him? If so, there might be some slight ground for accusing Him of infirmity of temper. But there is no hint of such a thing. The woes were pronounced upon them as workers of iniquity. It will not be necessary to cite the whole chapter—suffice it to denote the reason given to the successive "woes."

1. Shutting up the kingdom of heaven and neither entering in themselves nor suffering others to enter.

2. Devouring widows' houses, and for a pretence making long prayers.

3. Making their proselytes twofold more the children of hell than themselves.

4. Despising the temple and the altar, and preferring the gold and the gift.

5. Being rigidly ceremonious, but omitting judgment, mercy and faith.

- 6 and 7. Exhibiting a pious exterior, while preserving an *iniquitous* interior.

8. Being the children of them that killed the prophets.

Let us ask ourselves, first, were the charges true? and, secondly, were the offences enumerated worthy of "woe?" That the charges were true we see no reason to doubt—certainly they cannot be disproved. Often had the prophets of the nation rebuked them in similar terms for similar offences, and their rebellions against God are matters with which every reader of the Bible is familiar. They were a stiff-necked people, with little liking for the restraints of the law imposed upon them through Moses; and were generally more anxious to evade it than to keep it. The offences were serious sins, and such as must inevitably bring woe upon the person of offenders.

An angry man is apt to bring wholesale charges against his adversaries, not caring much whether they be true or false, and of opposing them in every way within his power. But there is no trace of such a spirit in the chapter now under consideration, as may be seen from the counsel recorded in the 2nd and 3rd verses of this chapter: "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe that observe and do,"—in which counsel Jesus manifested that He was not desirous of inciting the people against them. In the severe animadversion subsequently made upon them, His language is that of *a faithful teacher* rebuking manifested and secret sin in *high places*, and does not in the slightest degree

bespeak a feeling of personal resentment. An angry, irritated man, in his displays of infirmity of temper, *wishes* his antagonists to experience woe. But can we conceive that Jesus Christ entertained such a wish? No! He who in His moments of agony exclaimed of His tormentors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was superior to every feeling of resentment or animosity. His *whole* life manifested only a desire to save and bless, and indeed this very chapter contains His lament over Jerusalem, as part of the same address as that containing the "woes." There is neither malevolence nor petulance visible in any of the teachings of Jesus Christ. His general tone was loving and soothing; yet when occasion required His denunciations of sin were stern and uncompromising. John the Baptist had used similar language to that employed by our Saviour: "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

"Woe" inevitably follows sin, and it is well that men should clearly recognize the fact. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Indeed, so far from seeing anything in this condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees to decrease our reverence for Jesus Christ, we find an additional reason for giving to Him our highest devotion. It *stamps Him as the uncompromising opponent of*

wickedness in high places, as the enemy of hollowness, pretension, injustice, and spiritual pride. To expose the prevalence and tendency of these principles required no little courage—a less, scrupulous teacher would either have left them unnoticed or would have toned down his language, calling the vices less ugly names, and never hinting at their being possible to people of position and power. He denounced the sin that existed, and warned the perpetrators thereof—surely to do so is no evidence of *infirmity of temper*.

We only remember one passage in the Gospels in which anger is predicated of Jesus Christ. In Mark's Gospel, we read: "And He entered into the synagogue: and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched Him whether He would heal him on the Sabbath-day; that they might accuse Him. And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. *And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts,* He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand." But this is not anger allied to infirmity of temper: it is rather the semblance of anger caused by sorrow, being hatred of the spirit displayed mingled with grief for their obduracy.

The character of Jesus Christ has nothing to fear

from such comparisons as that to which we have alluded. Neither can it suffer, when He is spoken of as “deliberately disregarding family ties, as completely destitute of natural affection, cruel and disrespectful to His mother, and carried away by egotistical vanity.” These statements are foul distortions of the actual facts of the case as presented in the Gospels, and display in their very form an amount of *animus* that is, to say the least, unbecoming. The words “deliberately” and “completely” shew the tone in which the objection was raised—the “deliberateness” cannot be proved, the “completeness” is untrue concerning Him who wept by the grave of Lazarus. The other two charges of cruelty to His mother, and being carried away by egotistical vanity, may seem to have rather more force. If we accept Mr. Voysey’s premises, there may be some amount of truth in what he says ; but when we know that He was God as well as man, and that it was essential that He should guard against the idea that He was simply the son of Joseph and Mary, we may see some reason why He should to some extent ignore the relation in which He stood to her according to the flesh. “My mother and My brethren are they which hear the word of God, and do it.” The only ground upon which this charge of cruelty and disrespectfulness rests is, that at the marriage in Cana He addressed her “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” To make a charge like this upon such a basis as this is to pass the bounds of fair argument and common sense. In

reference to His "egotistical vanity" we have failed to see traces of anything of the kind. He was pre-eminently the friend and companion of the poor and lowly—amongst them "as He that serveth." We are somewhat surprised that such an argument should have been resorted to in order to meet the legitimate conclusion deducible from the high claims made by the Saviour. He certainly does put forward claims that no *mere man* could put forth with truth; and instead of admitting that He is more than human, Mr. Voysey alleges that He is guilty of "egotistical vanity." Mr. Voysey will find few candid men who will draw such a deduction from the Gospel story of the life of Jesus Christ. The charges are of so little weight, being unsupported by evidence, that it were a waste of time to dwell upon them at greater length.

Mr. Voysey also accuses Jesus Christ of "ignorance," asserting that He believed :—(1) in miracles and devils; (2) that the earth occupied a much more important astronomical position than it actually did; (3) that it was geographically about one thousandth part of its actual size; (4) that geometrically it was a vast plain of irregular surface, which could be seen at once from the top of a high mountain; (5) that the Father lived in a real dwelling-place above, and that He had twelve legions of angels ready to send to His Son's assistance; (6) that He was going to sit on the *right hand* of a real throne, and that He would return *to earth* after a brief interval, and during the lifetime

of His followers, to reign for a thousand years on the throne of His ancestor.

(1) Christ certainly did believe in miracles and devils; but that therefore He was ignorant is a *non-sequitur*. 2, 3, and 4, are doubtless based upon the account given concerning the temptation in the wilderness. We fail to see that He ever expressed an opinion either upon the astronomical, geographical, or geometrical character of the earth. There is no just foundation for saying that He believed the whole earth could be seen at once from the top of a high mountain—taking the narrative in its most literal aspect, the only fair deduction is that the DEVIL believed so.

5. What is the meaning of “a *real* dwelling-place above.” Surely Mr. Voysey does not mean a *material* dwelling-place—if so, there is no foundation for that part of the charge, and there is nothing betokening ignorance in the expression “in My Father’s house are many mansions.” We also can see no proof of ignorance in the declaration of the Lord concerning the twelve legions of angels.

6. This again is a grossly material interpretation of the Saviour’s teaching. There is no reason for believing that the “throne” or the “kingdom” alluded to were to be understood materially. “My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight.” Besides, Jesus Himself never acknowledged His descent from David. “If David in spirit called Him Lord, how can He be David’s son?” In interpreting the sayings

of Jesus Christ, we must remember that "the words that He speaks unto us are spirit and life"—not to be understood merely in their sensual or outward appearance, but in that inner meaning which lies beneath the letter which killeth, and the spirit that giveth life.

But suppose we examine all the charges that we have alluded to in this lecture from the position taken by Mr. Voysey in his Appeal. "Our Lord is represented as saying things that would encourage His disciples to look for His very speedy return in triumph and glory, and that not even that generation should pass away till they should see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. I need not waste words in shewing you the error of this belief. There is no alternative beyond this, either that Jesus Christ did not say these words, or that if He said them He must have been mistaken. I unhesitatingly choose the former of these statements, and believe that Jesus Christ never said these words, never intended to foretell anything so irrational, or so calculated to overthrow the moral government of God, as the fulfilment of such a prediction would." Is it not utterly inconsistent that, after this declaration, Mr. Voysey should have made a charge of ignorance upon this very point? (We can find no other language of the Saviour's that seems likely to have formed the ground of this charge of ignorance (No 6) than the *26th Matthew*, though Mr. Voysey has somewhat *exaggerated it*.) This is a plain case of quoting some-

thing, as a saying of Jesus, *that he believed Jesus never said* as a proof of His ignorance.

But let us take another extract from the Appeal. "Whole chapters of the said Gospel (John) are crowded with passages which represent Jesus as speaking words which He never could have spoken, and which if spoken would not have been believed." Taking up Mr. Voysey's theory that the Gospels are human compositions, containing many errors, and attributing to Jesus Christ "words which He never could have spoken," what right has he to base upon such evidences charges impugning the character of Jesus Christ? Upon his own shewing, the witnesses of Mr. Voysey are contradictory and unreliable, and THEREFORE not to be believed. Do not suppose that we adopt Mr. Voysey's views upon Bible interpretation. We have quoted it to shew the irrational mode of reasoning adopted by the so-called "new school of thought." They QUOTE the Gospels to PROVE *the imperfection and ignorance of the Saviour*—and then *impugn* the Gospels to vindicate His moral character. Quoting the Gospels and Jesus respectively to prove the un-reliableness of each other is a notable example of reasoning in a circle.

Again the Appeal tells us, on the part of Mr. Voysey, "So great is my reverence for our Lord Jesus Christ, that I have sacrificed certain portions of Holy Scripture to vindicate His moral character." It appears to us, *after reading the report of the recent lectures of Mr.*

Voysey, that he has some very original ideas about the manner of testifying to his "reverence." But without dwelling upon this, we would remark upon the arbitrary method adopted by Mr. Voysey in dealing with the Scriptures and Jesus Christ. If he reveres the Lord Jesus Christ, and has "sacrificed *certain portions* of Holy Scripture" because they appear to him to impugn the moral character of the Saviour, Mr. Voysey makes the moral character of the Saviour his *test of truth*, and is logically bound to sacrifice EVERY portion of Scripture that appears to him to have that effect. Thus Mr. Voysey has no solid basis upon which to found his attacks upon the perfectness of our Lord, if we allow him to use *his* method of dealing with the Gospels.

So also we contend, that, if he accepts *our* method, *i.e.* accepting them wholly as true, the charges cannot be proven. The charges rest upon an exaggerated interpretation of isolated passages, viewed in their most material aspect, but are capable of easy disproof upon comparison with other portions of holy writ. It is manifestly unfair to reject some portions of the Word as something "which He never could have spoken," and to receive others as full proofs of His ignorance and imperfection. It may be that in the parts rejected we may find the key to the parts quoted.

To us the first lesson of the Gospels is that Jesus *stands alone* in the records of loving mercy—His name *is the synonym* of love. Humanity can conceive no

more perfect ideal of the good and the true. Human hearts can cling to Him with that perfect love that casteth out fear ; and we know no higher aim than to live, “ till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

LECTURE VI.

THE MORALITY OF THE BIBLE.

(A reply to the Objections of Secularism, delivered February 6, 1870.)

"For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept."—

MARK x. 5.

THE Bible avows itself to be a revelation from God, "a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto the path;" and as such it has been generally received by professors of Christianity, who have deemed it the only safe guide of conduct and the only true standard of right.

When therefore it is denounced as an immoral book, we who accept its teachings cannot but be anxious that the charge should be fairly refuted. For if the Bible, *properly understood*, is a teacher of immorality, it is unworthy the high encomiums that have been passed upon it by the believers in revealed religion, unworthy the reverence of lovers of law and order and virtue, unworthy to retain the high title *which has generally been accorded to it wherever it has been circulated and studied*—"The Word of God."

To us the Bible is like a casket filled with gems of brilliant and precious truths—matchless in worth and beauty ; from Genesis to Revelation, the declarations recorded in the Bible as the utterances of God, in so far as they refer to the regulation of the conduct and the moulding of the character and life, speak to man of the paramount claims of virtue, strive to lead him towards the cherishing of more exalted motives, and endeavour to enforce the necessity of performing more efficiently the duties of life. We repeat it unhesitatingly—the injunctions of the Bible *ever* tend towards a higher morality. From one end of the book to the other there runs a succession of moral precepts, and rightly understood, the whole book is an unbroken chain, whose links join together the declaration—“ If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted, and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door ;” and the announcement, “ Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.” There is no virtue but what the Bible encourages—no vice which it does not denounce. Our Saviour summed up the whole moral tone of the Bible very concisely and very correctly in saying—“ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” These words convey to the Christian

the lesson, that the purport of the Scriptures is to teach love to God and man, and that only; and consequently, that in those passages which *appear* to teach something of an opposite tenor, the great lesson of love is taught, and may be discerned when viewed in a true light. But however conclusive the Saviour's teaching may be to those who regard Him as an infallible authority, it carries no weight with those who refuse to accept His testimony. These at once reply that Jesus was wrong in the matter, for instead of ever inculcating universal love to God and man, it is the encourager of vice and crime, the upholder of slavery, the degrader of woman, a tool in the hands of designing priests and tyrants, whereby nations may be kept in mental and physical bondage.

In support of this indictment numerous passages are cited, the most prominent of which we will shortly proceed to examine.

Permit us first, however, to lay down two canons of interpretation, which may assist us as we proceed:—

- 1st. The obscure part of a book must be interpreted in harmony with its clearly taken up positions, rather than the plain by deductions drawn from the obscure.
- 2d. Where a writer lays down a command in positive terms, and also gives a contingent regulation, his desire must be understood to accord with the former rather than the latter, where *the two appear to be antagonistic.*

These propositions will, we suppose, be easily understood by all, and be at once conceded by those who believe the Bible to be an utterly immoral book. (We may remark that the objections to the morality of the Bible that we are about to review, as far as our time will allow, are taken from the speeches of "Iconoclast" in the Ashton Debate on the Bible, and must therefore be presumed to be the most powerful objections that scepticism could bring.)

One constant ground of objection to the morality of the Bible is, that persons named therein in terms of commendation were notoriously guilty of grave crimes against morality. It cannot of course be maintained that a mere record of an evil life can be said to encourage immorality; for very frequently a feeling of repugnance arises from the perusal of such a record, a repugnance so strong as to induce the reader strictly to shun the evils spoken of and depicted. But it seems quite another matter when the individual committing the crimes is spoken of in terms of admiration.

The strongest case that objectors can take upon this ground is that founded upon the life and character of David. David is a prominent Bible character, and, says the objector, the Bible tells us that David is called "a man after God's own heart;" and he is further described as "having kept all the statutes and commandments of God," and yet we read also that he *was guilty of serious offences against morality,*

notably those of murder and adultery. We will consider how far the charge is true, that in relation to these crimes the Bible encourages immorality.

It is quite true that David, admiring a certain married woman, seduced her, and that he afterwards deliberately and treacherously planned the murder of her husband in order that he might gain complete possession of her.

We are not going to excuse or palliate the conduct of David, neither does the Bible. In the carrying out of this action he violated three of the laws of the Decalogue—"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not kill;" and therefore he acted in opposition to the plainly expressed injunctions of the Bible upon morality. To judge from the manner in which the secularists flourish the account of this crime as a fatal weapon against the morality of the Bible, we might almost infer that though the commands we have quoted seem explicit enough, the Bible states that David was congratulated by the Lord upon the accomplishment of his object. But what is the true state of the case? We shall find it stated in the Second Book of Samuel, beginning at the latter part of the last verse of the eleventh chapter, and reading onward through the twelfth. "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. And the Lord *sent* Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, *and said* unto him, There were two men in one city;

the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds : But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up : and it grew up together with him, and with his children ; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him ; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man ; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die : and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul ; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah ; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight ? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never

depart from thine house ; because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Is there anything here like encouragement of immorality? We deny that the *crimes* of David are anywhere encouraged, and here is a notable instance of a direct and stern rebuke. We know of no place in the Bible where David is spoken of as an example to be followed in all things.

The character of David was a mixed one marked by very distinct traits both good and evil ; and the account leads us to infer that the latter years of his life were the worst. He showed a remarkably courageous and magnanimous spirit in regard to Saul ; and we ask for a proof that he was other than virtuous up to the period at which the oft quoted declaration about God's own heart was made. The Apostle Paul, speaking to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch, in reviewing Jewish history, said, " God raised up David to be their king, to whom also He bare testimony, and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all My will." These words are a reference to 2nd Samuel 13-14. Samuel speaking to Saul says, " Thy kingdom shall not continue, the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart." This is the first scriptural allusion to David ; and we shall be quite warranted in coming to the conclusion, that at this time his character was of a very different *kind to what it was* when the Lord so sternly rebuked *him by the mouth of Nathan*, for everything connected

with his earlier life gives us the idea of a faithful, generous, and courageous mind. If we are to attempt to interpret what is said in the Bible about David, in the same manner as we should interpret anything said about some historical character at some certain period of his life, we must pay strict regard to the sequence of events. We argue therefore that though this general estimate of David was given at the beginning of his life, there is nothing in the whole course of his biography to warrant the conclusion that Divine sanction was given to any of his crimes. But replies the objector, It is stated that David was "a man who walked in God's ways all the days of his life, obeyed all His statutes and kept all His commandments." We are not aware that such a passage is to be found in the Bible; we do not read that he obeyed all the statutes, or walked in God's ways *all* the days of his life, or kept *all* the commandments: but it is certain that whatever evil was in him he kept very strictly many of the Divine commands and statutes. In so far as he did so his conduct is worthy of our admiration, and no further. As strong a passage as exists upon this subject is 1st Kings xi. 3, "They have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments as did David;" but a study of the context shews us that these words relate specifically to the question of idolatry. We have not touched upon the typical character of David; but *have dealt* with the subject simply upon the merits

of the literal history. We have tried to argue the question fairly, and the conclusion to which we come is that the rebuke of Nathan negatives distinctly the idea of the Bible upholding his great crime ; that his character changed in his later life ; but that still he withheld the people from the sin of idolatry, and otherwise kept the Divine law ; and that whatever general commendation is given of his character, neither expresses nor implies an approval of his wrongdoing. We have dwelt at some length upon this part of our subject, because it is a matter frequently made use of by the opponents of the Bible.

Another source whence many of the weapons of infidelity are drawn is the code of laws given to the Jews. It is alleged that the Bible supports slavery, and permits the degradation of woman, and several other things. We will examine these two general charges first, because of their seriousness, and because they appear to be well supported charges, and are very frequently brought.

Slavery was not first brought into the world by the law of Moses ; we read of it in the days of Abraham and Joseph. Yet it is certainly often referred to in the Mosaic law, and regulations are given as to the manner in which the dealings between masters and their slaves are to be conducted. But this does not necessarily imply the Divine sanction of slavery, or that the Bible *indulges* the propriety of the slave trade.

We spoke a short time ago about the distinction

necessary to be observed between express commands and contingent regulations—laying it down as an axiom that the former and not the latter must be regarded as most in harmony with the desires of a law-giver. We contend that the Bible regulations about slavery must be looked upon as given for the purpose of lessening the horrors of the traffic, rather than for that of promoting it ; and this statement is not by any means a gratuitous assumption.

The holding of slaves is nowhere in the Bible inculcated as a duty ; it is never stated to be in harmony with the will of God—altogether it is treated as an existing institution, and the general tenor of the laws regarding it is in the direction of keeping it in as humane a condition as possible, and restricting its barbarities. We know the arbitrary manner in which in all nations owners have dealt with their slaves—their lives have been wholly in their hands, and no law whatever could interfere with whatever they chose to do. It would be an improvement of very considerable importance to bring the institution under the influence of definite and fixed laws.

But it may be asked, Why did not God absolutely prohibit slavery? We answer in the words of Jesus in His reply to a similar question, "Because of the hardness of their hearts." The whole history of the Jewish nation reveals them as a rebellious and stiff-necked people, only to be kept in anything like order *through the influence of fear, without any very high*

standard of moral action among them as a nation. This will be conceded readily by our secularist friends, who are never tired of expatiating upon the depravity of the Jews; as we heard it recently expressed by one of its advocates, "I think God showed very bad taste in choosing such a people." It does not come within the province of our present subject to inquire into the reasons possessed by the Almighty actuating Him to make such a choice. We will take the fact, and the worse we suppose them to have been, the better shall we appreciate the argument we are advancing. The Jews were selfish and sensual, and to have given them a perfectly unselfish and spiritual code of laws would have been useless. The character of a people cannot be suddenly changed—the best laws are those which the intelligence of the people can understand and appreciate. Therefore, in dealing with the Jews, certain things not in harmony with the Divine Will were permitted by reason of the hardness of their hearts—and the effect of all these permissions was to check to some extent the evils which they seemed to allow.

A very cursory examination will show that in all the laws relating to slavery there is a merciful proviso. For instance, in the 21st chapter of Exodus, the first regulation commences—"If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve, and in the seventh *he shall go out free, for nothing.*" This is a contingent *regulation*, or a law of permission, "If thou buy," &c.,

“he shall go out free in the seventh year, for nothing,” certainly a far more humane law than that of forced perpetual slavery. But it is said that the 4th verse is not of a humane character: “If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons and daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself.” We do not argue that this is the best thing to be desired, but it is one of the necessary attendants upon slavery.

Then again, in the seventh verse of the same chapter, “If a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the men-servants do. If she please not her master who hath betrothed her unto himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. If he take him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.” This law, we may remark, in the first place, neither encourages men to sell their daughters, nor to turn their wives out of doors, as has been alleged. Where, in the annals of modern or ancient slavery, do we hear of a bought slave being raised to the dignity of a wife, the man being forbidden to sell her, and being enjoined to treat her in a suitable manner, or she would have the *right to leave him and declare herself free.*

The next regulation in the 20th and 21st verses of the same chapter, does not seem open to quite so favourable a construction. "If a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his money."

But connect this with what is laid down in the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses: "If a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. And if he smite out his man-servant's tooth or his maid-servant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake." Making every allowance for what we may, looking at the point from high grounds of morality, call the license granted by the twenty-first verse, the whole regulation is a decided step towards the restraining of violence and the amelioration of the condition of the slave.

The whole law of Jewish slavery, indeed, tends to make the horrid system as mild as possible; the slavery of their own race was of a very mild description, often no more than working out a debt, and was not perpetual, except by the choice of the slave. Bondmen of other nations were *allowed* to be bought and kept slaves for ever, but still their treatment was regulated by laws much more merciful than that of the *slaves of other nations*. This difference between the *treatment of Hebrews and aliens* has often been quoted

as an additional evidence of Bible immorality. We reply that the natural bent of the Hebrew mind was to enslave everybody, and that in restraining them from the exercise of their lust of avarice and power upon their countrymen, a considerable change for the better was made. To appeal to them on the ground of a common humanity would doubtless have been altogether useless ; whilst an appeal to the narrower motive of a common country and a common interest would be much more likely to awaken a response. Again, we repeat that the Bible nowhere encourages slavery, and the tenor of its teaching, " All souls are Mine ;" " God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth," most directly condemns it. Would you like to know the origin of the first enactment against the slave trade? Turn to the 21st Exodus, 16th verse, " He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

Then again, in regard to the biblical morality in regard to woman, which is alleged to have a tendency towards her degradation. We cannot enter into a detailed examination of the various charges in this respect ; we will, however, consider the most serious one. An opponent of the Bible says : " the Bible recommends you to steal a woman, and by force rob her of her virtue, and then turn her into the streets." This alludes to what is written in the 21st chapter of Deuteronomy, commencing at the 10th verse. " When thou goest forth to war

against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife ; then shalt thou bring her home to thine house ; and she shall shave her head, and pair her nails ; and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month : and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whether she will ; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandize of her, because thou hast humbled her." This is in no sense a *recommendation* either to steal a woman, to rob her of her virtue, or to turn her into the streets. Its purport is to provide against the indulgence of lust, by insisting that the man who takes a woman captive, shall not be allowed to rob her of her virtue, but shall allow a sufficient length of time to elapse in which he can consider the nature of the step he is about to take, and then that he shall make her his WIFE. We are ready to admit that under the Jewish law slight causes were held to be sufficient to obtain a divorce, "because of the hardness of their hearts ;" but still with the permission of putting away the wife, there is *coupled* the provision : "thou shalt not sell her for *money*, thou shalt let her go whither she will." To

us, it seems very evident, that this law, so far from *recommending* the vicious acts spoken of, would tend greatly to check and discountenance them.

Again, we repeat that in these permissive laws no sanction is given to anything immoral or degrading.

Another ground of attack against the Bible is that many people mentioned therein as chosen messengers of God were immoral men, and the names of Samson and others are quoted. We must confess that we cannot conceive what this has to do with the question at all. If the Bible upholds their immoralities and puts them forward as examples worthy in all points to be followed, then the argument will have some force. But we do not find this to be the case. Looking at the general character of the people it seems very likely that it would often have been impossible to have found perfect and upright men. The Judges of Israel were chosen to perform certain works because they possessed the qualities needed for their accomplishment—and thus frequently among the Jews, as in later days, bad men were rendered of service to the nation in the performance of important uses. This may be seen even in the case which above all others presents a difficulty to the reader of the Bible—the slaying of Sisera by Jael, and the encomium passed upon her in the song of victory, “Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.” Her act was deceitful and treacherous, yet it might have been done from motives as pure

as those of a Washington or a Garibaldi—for twenty years had her countrymen been oppressed by a foreign king, and here she saw the opportunity for destroying the leader of the oppressing army. We know how repugnant such an act would be to the nature of a woman ; and in the doing of the act, and the risk of her life, she testified to the ardent love of her country and the strength of her desire to see it once more established in a state of freedom. If such was her motive, and we have every reason for believing it to be so, though the dissimulation and the treachery were criminal acts, we can well conceive that the Great God, who looketh not on the outward appearance but judgeth from the heart, might commend her, as we not being able to discern her motives, not being aware of the extent of her knowledge of the laws of justice and right, should not be justified in doing. We put forward these views upon the conduct of Jael with a degree of diffidence—we freely acknowledge that the subject is not devoid of difficulty when approached simply from a literal point of view—but we think that at any rate they must commend themselves as quite reasonable, shewing at least that in a case where it is possible and even probable that a high motive may have moved her to action (and all must concede that the motive determines the quality of the act), we are not justified in rejecting the Bible because it commends *her conduct*.

Apart from this the Bible presents no difficulty to us

on account of the morality which it teaches—even the laws of permission were in advance of the age, and were a check upon crime and viciousness of every description. The Bible itself distinctly states that the children of Israel were not chosen for the purity of their lives or their importance as a people: “Understand that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people;” “The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of any people.” In dealing with a stiff-necked people, as we have previously tried to shew, many things were permitted that were not in harmony with the desires of the Lord. This is the teaching of the prophet Jeremiah, “I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people, and walk ye in all the ways that I commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” The same subject is treated of in Ezekiel: “Because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers’ idols, wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.” Here it is most clearly intimated that in *order to reach the low external condition of the people,*

the high truths and the essential commandments of God needed to be accompanied by accommodated truths, representative ordinances, and permissive regulations, "because of the hardness of their hearts." It is naturally the act of a wise lawgiver and teacher to give laws and impart instruction suited to the capacities of his subjects and scholars. The education of the world, as is most clearly shown by Dr. Temple in his contribution to the "Essays and Reviews," must be like that of the individual, giving deeper truths and propounding purer motives, as the development of the intellectual and moral faculties is gradually accomplished. And since the Bible, by taking up in its literal sense low ground as well as high ground, is capable of reaching all classes of minds, it proves itself the fitting guide of the morality of the whole world, in the childhood and in the manhood of humanity!

Along with the permissive law to which we have referred, the law of Moses inculcates the duties of mutual assistance, and justice and love. Take for example the 19th chapter of Leviticus, verses 9-18, verses 32-37. Or the words of Micah, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." We might readily multiply quotations from the Old Testament if need be to any extent; but it will readily be admitted that numerous passages exist wherein the *commands* of the Decalogue, and the performance of *the moral duties* of life, are urgently insisted upon.

But in treating of "the morality of the Bible," we must treat the Bible as a whole. And in the New Testament we are taught by Jesus Christ that the things upon which the Jews laid the greatest stress were the least important: "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith." We are taught further that the regulations permitted to the Jewish dispensation, whose tenor seems opposed to the spirit of justice and love and right, were not to be regarded as expressive of the will of the Divine Being, but only as permissions to exist for a time, and then give place to a higher code of morality; for he who said—"For the hardness of your heart He wrote you this precept," also said—"Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, swear not at all." "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil:" "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies."

We do not by any means discard the Old Testament Scriptures; but we claim that in estimating the morality of the Bible, that the New Testament and the Old shall be viewed together. We act unfairly *when we quote disconnected passages, without either*

regarding the context or the general laws laid down for our guidance. The plain teaching of the Bible is that of a pure and high morality, warning men against evil and its consequences, and pointing them to goodness of heart and life.

It is the enemy of vice, of hypocrisy, and of oppression; and the Mosaic laws all tend in one direction, restraining altogether where possible, assuaging where prevention is impossible, every feeling that carried into life would wrong or injure another. The Apostle tells us that the law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; and when Christ was asked, What is the great commandment of the law, He replied, That upon the duties of love to God and man hang all the law and all the prophets.

Surely if the Bible were the friend of immorality, we should find that those who laboured so earnestly to disseminate it would, instead of warning the sinner to repentance, counsel him to remain in his evils and foster his immoral tendencies. But not so have the great and good men of the past who have loved the Bible interpreted it. They have studied it carefully because of their love, regarding it as the only rule of life; they have been anxious to know its teaching, and their testimony is far more likely to be true than that of its enemies. But the book is before us to speak for itself, and we feel persuaded that he who studies *it closely*, not for the purpose of detecting flaws *therein*, but to discover the beauty of its teachings,

will rise up from the study convinced that, whatever else the book is, it is not immoral.

To-night we have not been engaged in supporting the belief of the Divine Authority of the Bible, else we should have striven to shew that more than a mere literal examination is needed for deciding upon its claims ; we have taken up the question before us as we would have taken up any other book given to the world in the same gradual manner, presented to people of similar character, professing to be a moral guide and authority.

For our own part, we value the Bible chiefly because of its inner meaning ; but we believe that it is quite possible to withstand the charge of immorality urged against it by an appeal to the literal sense only. It meets man on the lowest moral platform, leading him on by little and little to the greatest heights of moral integrity ; to all it says, " Come up higher."

The depravity of sin, the beauty of virtue, the way of amendment, are graphically depicted and perpetually insisted upon. " If I say unto the wicked thou shalt surely die ; if the wicked man turn from his way and do that which is lawful and right ; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, and walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die."

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